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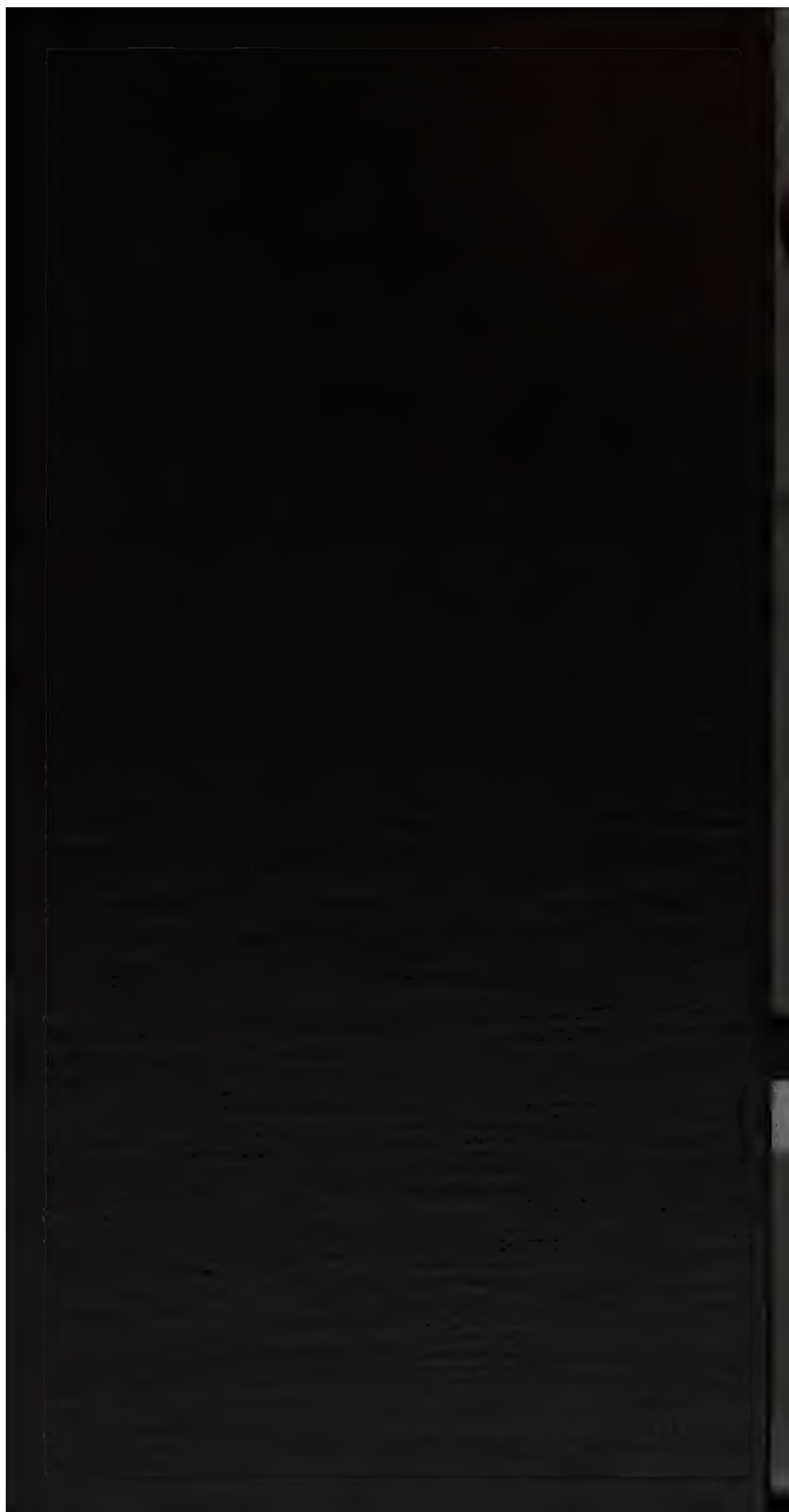
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FROM THE COLLECTION
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First Unitarian Society
A
COLLECTION
OF
PIECES AND TRACTS,
ILLUSTRATIVE OF
THE FAITH OF THOSE CHRISTIANS
WHO HOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF
THE UNITY OF GOD,
AND THE
SALVATION OF SINNERS BY HIS FREE GRACE
IN THE GOSPEL.

*Edited under the Direction of the Committee of the First Unitarian Society
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REFLECTIONS

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

THE true intention of the gospel writers was not to give a complete account of all the things that Jesus did, much less of all the reasons and occasions of them; but only to record so many naked facts* of

* To make evident, who that master was, whose disciples they professed themselves, their business was to tell how they knew him, what miracles he had wrought, and all those other particulars of which we read in their gospel: in which they make use of no disquisitions, but, in a plain and faithful narrative, declare their knowledge of these matters. And this looks like the singular care and wisdom of Divine Providence, that nothing of human invention might be said to be mixed with the gospel; which could not have been prevented, had the apostles in their writings set down not only what they themselves had seen, but their conjectures also, and deductions from the actions and sayings of our Saviour.

It doth not appear, that ever it came into the mind of these writers, to consider how this or the other action would appear to mankind; or what objections might be raised upon them. But without at all attending to this they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their testimony there is

each kind as would be abundantly sufficient to lay a sure foundation for our faith in his divine mission, and by that faith lead us to eternal happiness.

And indeed the account which we find there delivered, plain as it is and simple, and by that very simplicity, the more credible, is in itself of so very extraordinary a nature, and exhibits such an amazing scene of wisdom and goodness, as must, when duly attended to, convince us that it could have no less than a divine original.

That the great messenger and mediator of a new covenant, fixed in the divine decrees from the beginning, foretold by the ancient prophets, and announced by a host of angels: that he should at length

no help for it; they tell the truth, and attend to nothing else. Surely this looks like sincerity; and that they published nothing to the world but what upon the best evidence they believed themselves. It is likewise remarkable, that through the whole of their histories the evangelists have not passed one encomium upon Jesus, or upon any of his friends; nor thrown out one reflection against his enemies, although much of both kinds might, and no doubt would have been done by them, had they been governed either by a spirit of imposture or enthusiasm. Christ's life is not praised in the gospel, his death is not lamented, his friends not commended, his enemies not reproached, nor even blamed: but every thing is set down just as it happened; and all who read are left to judge and make reflection for themselves; a manner of writing which the historians would never have fallen into, had not their minds been under the guidance of the most sober reason, and deeply impressed with the dignity, importance, and truth of their subject.

appear, not only in the form but real nature of man, and in its most imperfect and forlorn state, under all the wants and weaknesses and pains of infancy: that he should receive the divine communications in slow degrees,* and mixed with all the infirmities of childhood: that after such wisdom and knowledge had been imparted to him as was far above his present situation, he should nevertheless continue for the best part of thirty years under a silent subjection to his parents, in a low laborious employment, which contributed nothing in a natural way to the acquiring of such attainments as might qualify him for that high office which he was then to undertake:† that when he entered on his ministry, and was endowed with full powers for the discharge of it, and able to destroy his several adversaries with a single word, he should still undergo the various assaults of those who eagerly pursued him for no cause but one that merited a very different return, viz. his labouring to rescue them from their captivity to sin, and restore them to the liberty of the sons of God, by reconciling them

* Luke ii. 52.

† His deferring it to that age was, as Lightfoot observes, according to the law, Num. iv. 3. 23. 35. 43. 47. That at the commencement of this office, he was very properly prepared for the execution of it, by a due exercise of private meditation and intense devotion, as well as by a lively prefiguration of the principal difficulties that attended it, is well shown in "An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness," by H. Farmer.

to his government, from which they had so long deviated, raising them from that abject state of folly and vice into which they were fallen, reducing them to a right sense of their duty, and thereby reinstating them in the divine favour, and rendering them meet to be partakers of a happy immortality: all this taken together constitutes such an amazing instance of the most benevolent condescension in Jesus, as must, one would think, provoke our love and gratitude, though we were not able to account for every circumstance attending it. Just reasons, however, may be assigned for his appearing in this way rather than any other. From all God's dispensations for the government of mankind, in matters of religion, it is plain that though he affords evidence sufficient to convince impartial judgments, yet there is none of such a nature as to confound their understandings, and compel their assent. But had Christ come from heaven in the full brightness of his father's glory; had he made his first appearance publicly among the Jewish rulers, proclaiming his divine commission, and demanding their immediate submission to his authority, by a train of stupendous miracles, so that none of them should have been able to withstand him; this method, beside its giving too much countenance to the wrong notions they had entertained of the Messiah's kingdom, and encouraging them to come into it without proper qualifications, and upon principles directly opposite to its real constitution and design; this would have been too violent and overbear-

ing to have left any room for merit; any exercise of the moral virtues in those who adhered to him upon such views; and the relation of it would have been of too suspicious a nature to engage the belief of distant ages and nations: it would have been far from affording any competent trial of that humble, upright, and ingenuous temper, which is the chief glory and happiness of each sincere worshipper of God; the discovery and exercise of which was one great end of the Messiah's office; and to encourage and reward which, is the true aim of all religious dispensations.

2dly. The circumstance of our Saviour being introduced in so low a state as that of a common infant, appears no less proper to confirm the truth of his mission. In order to prepare the world for his reception, to keep up an expectation of his advent, as well as to distinguish him when he did appear, the several qualifications relative to his person, pedigree, &c. were at large described long before. It was promised in particular that he should be of the seed of Abraham, tribe of Judah and family of David; but if he had appeared at first in an adult state, he would have borne no more relation to one tribe or family than another. If what some of the Jews advanced from their traditions, "that when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is," were true, it would have been impossible for any such prophecies as these to have been accomplished, and extremely difficult for the people, to whom he was primarily

sent, much more for others, to have come to a sufficient certainty about him.

3dly. This circumstance, that Christ, the great deliverer of mankind should himself be subject to so many difficulties in the course of his undertaking, however harsh and humiliating it may appear, furnishes one of the strongest evidences that both his commission and his qualifications for the discharge of it, were from above. Had Jesus studied every branch of science, under the ablest masters of those days, we might have ascribed his eminent accomplishments to their assistance and direction; but when, absolutely destitute of all such means of improvement, he bursts out of obscurity at once with a lustre that surpasses all the sages of antiquity, we cannot but look out for some superior cause of these extraordinary effects. To proceed :

When, in the prosecution of this great and generous undertaking, he meets with a most unkind reception from that nation to whom he had been originally promised, and who were so fully prepared to expect him; instead of publicly displaying all the powers with which he was invested, and admitting all that homage which the high character of such a heavenly messenger might have most justly demanded ;* instead, I say, of accepting that due tri-

* These divine powers were principally designed as the seal of his mission, and accordingly were very rarely applied to different purposes. This appropriation of his miracles to their original intention, served to point that out more clearly, and keep

bute of esteem and veneration which must naturally attend the opening of his divine commission with the plain, honest, and undesigning people; but which would have no other effect upon the inveterate prejudices, pride, and ingratitude of their rulers than to make them more obstinately resist the counsel of God against themselves, and reject and even despise the gracious terms he had to offer; instead of magnifying his office; and claiming all the distinctions and regard due to the painful execution of it, he kindly chooses to avoid every instance of extraordinary respect, if it might have a tendency to raise their

it constantly in view; to manifest the wisdom and necessity of the works themselves, and to preserve their dignity, and authority, which would have been greatly impaired by a more general application of them; and as Christ seldom applied them to any purpose foreign to their grand intention, so it was in a peculiar manner necessary that they should not be employed merely to protect and preserve himself from the calamities to which human nature in general, or the particular malice of his enemies, exposed him.

Had he saved himself by miracles from all the difficulties and distresses which attended his situation in life, where had been his conflict, his victory, his triumph? or where the consolation and benefit his followers derive from his example, his patience, his crown? Sufferings were the theatre on which he displayed his divine virtues, and they were both the ground of his advancement to the glorious office of our redeemer, and a natural means of inspiring him with compassion towards all who were to follow him. Farmer's Inquiry into Christ's Temptation.

envy or provoke their indignation*. He conceals his preeminence under the mean garb of poverty, and suits the several parts of his conduct to his present situation; he withdraws himself out of the common road of popularity, confining his wonders for the most part to private places and obscure villages; till he had done enough to ascertain the evidence and establish the belief of his divine authority amongst them; till he was ready to finish all that remained for him to do in a more public manner, by witnessing his last good confession both before the Jewish and the Roman magistrates, by declaring the true end of his coming into the world, and bearing testimony to his most unblameable life before these iniquitous judges; and (which was the necessary consequence of that, without either violently overruling them, or miraculously escaping from them) sealing the same confession with his blood.

Consistently with the same plan, the persons he chose for partners in this work were of the meanest class, as well in station as abilities, who could only follow him at first upon the lowest views, and would at every turn be urging and impatient to have these accomplished: nor were they to be let into his real

* To name one instance out of many. A strong proof of this appears in his forbidding the leprous person to divulge the manner of his cure, and likewise in ordering him to present himself to the priest's examination, who was to judge of and bear testimony to his being perfectly cured; and who might otherwise have taken occasion to complain of him as a violator of the law, and an invader of the sacerdotal office.

aim but by slow steps, and after a long series of gentle discipline. Such persons were in many respects most difficult to be dealt with; yet on the same account the fittest instruments in that for which they were intended, namely, to testify what they had so often seen and heard; and on all accounts proper to afford the best, most unexceptionable evidence to futurity: such as could by no means be supposed capable of themselves either to conceive a scheme so great as that of reforming a world, or entertain the least hope of accomplishing it when suggested to them: such as wanted both courage and conduct to attempt this vast design with any tolerable prospect of success; such, lastly, as he must suffer often to doubt and dispute with him; sometimes to distrust, desert, and even deny him; to convince after ages that they were such as could not with the least show of reason be suspected of having at first concerted all this of themselves, or carried it on afterwards among themselves, or effected what they did effect of it by any methods merely human.

With such as these did Christ hold conversation during the whole course of his ministry; affectionately complying with their weakness, and patiently enduring their perverseness in order to cure them both; to strengthen their faith by degrees, and free them from all superstitious fears; to open their eyes, and enlarge their understandings so far that at length they might “even of themselves judge what was right,” and teach the same to others.

To these, and, by them, to the world, he sets a perfect pattern of humility and resignation to the will of God; of meekness and the most extensive benevolence to man; demonstrating to what height virtue may be carried under the most disadvantageous circumstances, and showing the practicableness of each part of our duty in the greatest difficulties. With the utmost zeal and constancy does he labour to dissuade and drive men from their ruin; and in the most endearing manner strive to draw and win them over to their truest happiness, and raise their minds above the little interests of this lower world. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you, but let not your hearts be troubled; I go to prepare a place for you. Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Having denied himself the comforts and enjoyments of this world, and at length laid down his life in executing the great plan of conducting men to a better; he rises again to revive the hopes of his desponding followers, and converses familiarly with them to confirm them in the faith, by a full assurance that he had all power in heaven and earth. And great occasion was there for such ground of comfort to them, who thought they had lost him, for whose sake they had parted with all other comforts. Greater yet, to reform and rectify their notions of and expectations from him, which were still fixed on im-

mediate prospects of some temporal advancement, notwithstanding all that he had taught them to the contrary; nor could they help concluding that he would at this time certainly make use of all his power in the destruction of his and their enemies; and the erecting of the so long expected kingdom to which every other kingdom of the earth should bow.

But he soon shows them how far this was from being any branch of his office as described by the prophets: how inconsistent with his whole behaviour in discharging it; that on his very first entrance on it he had rejected the offer of these kingdoms and their glory; and that for the future they must think of renouncing all their narrow national prejudices of being a peculium crowned with conquest, wealth and power; that instead of coming a Messiah to bless his people in *their sense*, by distinguishing them from all the rest of mankind in things to which they had no better title, and of which they were not likely to make any better use; by not only delivering them from their subjection to other nations, but reducing every nation into an absolute submission to them; that he was to bring them blessings and deliverances, and raise them to a dominion of quite another kind: to bless them by turning every one of them from those iniquities to which they were enslaved; to deliver them from their spiritual chains of darkness, death and misery; and lead them to the light of life and happiness in his heavenly kingdom. Thus they

were to become the means of opening to the rest of the world, inviting mankind to enter with them into that inheritance; as their forefathers had been the great instruments of bringing men to the knowledge of that one true God, who is the giver of it; that as these his followers had all along seen ample proofs of his divine legation to this purpose, and were now to be let into the nature and design of his undertaking so far as they were capable of bearing a part in it, so they should shortly be invested with sufficient powers to carry it on without him, and enabled to proclaim and propagate it to the ends of the earth. After forty days spent by Christ in training and preparing his disciples for this great work of establishing a kingdom of so very different a kind, and to be established by ways so different from what they had hitherto imagined, he meets them all together, leads them out to some distance from Jerusalem, takes leave of them with his last solemn benediction, and, having promised to give them yet further proof of his care and love, by sending them another comforter, ascends visibly before them into heaven.

Having taken a short view of our Saviour's conduct, more particularly in private life, and run over some of the steps of his humiliation; let us stop a little to reflect upon the great excellence of such a character, and observe some of the signal benefits which we receive from this part of his conduct. Whenever we turn our thoughts upon the infinite perfections of the most high God, and try to form

some adequate apprehensions of them, though they appear well worthy of all adoration, yet is our view of them but faint and dim, on account of their sublimity and distance from us; and what views we may have of them, are apt rather to excite astonishment and awe, than move the softer and more endearing passions; and therefore the ideas of loving and delighting in God, were such as the most elevated heathen writers could not reach: nor indeed had they among all the crowd of their divinities any proper objects of religious homage.

But *here* the deity lets himself down to our capacities, and becomes on a level with our tenderest affections; discovers himself under the intimate relations of a friend and a father; displays such an affecting scene of the mildest and most merciful condescension as must strike even the dullest, and warm the coldest heart.

The Lord, who knows our frame, sees that we are not capable of beholding him in his full glory, and therefore kindly draws a veil over it, suiting his several dispensations to the feeble subjects of them. He sends a messenger in our own state and circumstances, who being encompassed with our infirmities, experiencing our difficulties and temptations, and having a fellow-feeling of all our troubles, might show how well qualified he was to bear with us and teach us to bear them; to have compassion on the ignorant and those that were in error; pointing out to us the true way to happiness, and enabling us to walk there.

in; leading us gently by the hand, inviting and encouraging us to come to God through him. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: he that hath seen me hath seen the father. All that my father hath is mine: I and my father are one, as I and you are one."

Thus, he who was to his own people formerly the Lord of Hosts, a mighty God and terrible, jealous, avenging, and whose whole worship was styled fear (a worship fitly accommodated to such people), is now to men of more enlarged minds, under this proportionably more indulgent dispensation, the God of all joy and consolation; the father of mercies, whose children and heirs we are said to be; whom we are taught to approach in a more liberal way, with a true filial assurance, whose darling attribute is goodness, and the first principle and great commandment in his law, the end and the completion of it, love.

These amiable representations, illustrated in the most easy and agreeable manner, must above all things tend to strengthen and confirm our faith, enliven our hope, and draw our whole soul after him that so loved us, and dwelt amongst us: especially that, which was the greatest possible instance of affection for us, his voluntarily laying down his life, to bring us from a state of misery and disobedience, and reconcile us to the happy, gracious government of our heavenly father. This cannot but endear his character to all who are capable of giving attention to it; and will in a much nearer and more tender manner unite him to us, and make the memory

and contemplation of him more affecting than that of any other being, however great, good, and glorious, who has not undergone the like kind office, or appeared in such familiar light to us.

And though in order to direct our reason to the proper object of religious worship, and guard against every misconception of our true relation thereto, we are oft reminded who it was that originally provided this redemption for us; yet in that other, no less essential (perhaps with the bulk of mankind the predominant) part of our nature, by which religion and every thing else take the strongest hold of us—the passions—we are necessarily touched in a much more sensible manner, with what is so very obvious to our present comprehensions, and as it were analogous to what we feel among ourselves; and may be satisfied, that the benevolent author of our being will make due allowances for this, so far as it becomes unavoidable; which is in some degree the case at present universally: and every one that reflects upon the general turn of his own mind in his devotion, will, I believe, find it to be so; which is, in this respect, an experimental proof of the propriety and beauty of the plan before us.

And as this dispensation was well suited to the frame of human nature in general, and an improvement on the foregoing one to the Jews; so it was no less properly accommodated to the state of the heathen world; and no less necessary in the circum-

stances under which it then was, and must in all probability have continued.

The founders and supporters of religious institutes among the Gentiles, had no better ground for them than uncertain tales of empty apparitions of their fictitious deities, or as blind and vague reports of their transactions; some of these ill devised by themselves, others in great part copied from true scripture, history, or primitive tradition; but all so much abused and blended with each kind of vice and folly, to comply with the general corruption, and suit the several tastes and tempers of particular countries, as at length rendered the whole little else than a gross compound of absurdity and immorality, and made their very worship and devotion impious.

Their system of doctrines, and subsequent rites, must by these means be extremely complicated, and vary according to the various degrees of superstition and impurity that reigned amongst them: yet they were all so far of the same cast and complexion, that there could be no great room for a competition with each other in point of either authenticity or excellence; it would be hard to distinguish between the different sorts of evidence producible in different places for the one; or of the reasons that might be alleged to vindicate the other, since custom was the common plea for both; since both were equally uncertain in their origin, and both alike unprofitable as pertaining to the conscience. So that, when any species of idolatry was

once established in a nation or city, it must with the generality be either a point of necessity to abide by it, since they could find no better, or appear a matter of indifference whether they should exchange it for any other, or admit that other along with it, as occasion served; and this might well be left to the determination of the state.

Such were the circumstances of the heathen world, when Christ appeared to put an end to all those lying vanities, and turn men to the living and true God; by exhibiting a plan of religion in every respect worthy of such a Being, and which would lead them to the love and likeness of him.

Farther : Men had been so long used to the notion of supernatural appearances, and messages from heaven, and a pretence of these been made the ground of every article of faith and mode of worship, that nothing but a real one, clear and better circumstanced, could be conceived to prove effectual toward bringing the generality to a firm belief in one true, spiritual, invisible God; and induce them to worship him in spirit and in truth, and assure them of always finding access to him. Dry, abstract reasoning would go but a little way with the vulgar, who, though they are most susceptible of sudden impressions, yet require something strong and visible to strike them; nor would a few transient signs and dazzling wonders serve to make any such impressions last. Of these they had already but too many reported among them; and the more common

such reports grew, the less were they regarded, not only on account of their suspicious evidence, though that was enough to discredit them, but chiefly for want of a connection with some regular course of instruction, and a set of doctrines worthy of such a divine interposition; and of their being expressly produced as vouchers for these doctrines, and applied accordingly to confirm that interposition.

This did Christ frequently perform in the most public manner, and by this did his institution outshine every part of heathenism, as well in point of evidence afforded to it, as of instruction conveyed by it. From whence might be drawn another proof, both of the usefulness of such a plan, and of the great necessity that there was for it.

But I proceed to some remarkable circumstances in our Saviour's life and manner of teaching.

As to the former, we cannot but observe a surprising mixture of humility and greatness, dignity and self-degradation, in his general demeanor, both which were equally instructive in their turns. Sometimes we find him solemnly asserting the dignity of his commission, at other times the meekest and the lowest of the sons of men; sometimes informing his followers that he could command legions of angels were it necessary; at others, apprising them that he should be more destitute of common conveniences than even the beasts of the field, or birds of the air; now telling them that a greater than Solomon was amongst them; now washing his disciples' feet.

Conscious of his own power and just prerogative, yet all submission to the powers in being, complying with their laws and institutions, however hazardous or inconvenient to him, and paying their demands to the uttermost, though at the expense of a miracle. On some occasions publishing the character and office which he bore; on others, carefully concealing them in order to prevent the hasty misconstruction of his friends; to guard against the inveterate malice of his foes, and gain sufficient time to fix a good foundation for the faith of all.

None more industrious and zealous in the cause of God; none more indifferent and resigned in his own. He patiently endures all kinds of affronts and outrages offered to his person, as well as the frequent insults on his reputation, and intercedes for the forgiveness of his murderers; yet when his father's honour is concerned, he vindicates it with uncommon warmth; he publicly chastises the profaners of his temple, and threatens the severest punishment to such as continued to blaspheme the power and spirit by which he was acting. He is ready to receive publicans and harlots, disdains not to converse with characters of all descriptions, persons most odious and of worst repute, but whom he sees to be truly penitent, and equally desirous of instruction: while he rejects the formal, sanctimonious hypocrite; and reprimands the self-sufficient Pharisee.

He detects, and with authority rebukes, the flattery of the proud, perverse querist; but satisfies each

scruple and resolves every doubt of the sincere and humble searcher after truth, even before they are so much as intimated to him. He cherishes the broken-hearted, comforts the desponding, strengthens and supports the weak and wavering, condescends to the infirmities of the meanest, that has the least spark of goodness in him; but never gratifies the vanity or gives way to the petulancy of the greatest.

Nor did this mixture of so various, and seemingly opposite qualities, which constituted the foregoing contrast, proceed from any variation in his own temper, but wholly in that of those among whom he conversed. He steadily adheres to the same principle, and constantly pursues one plain and uniform design, of doing all the service possible, on all occasions, to all sorts of people; doing it in the most agreeable manner too, whenever that becomes consistent with their real interest; sympathising with men in their several states and dispositions; suiting himself to every one's circumstances and capacity; applying to each part of the human constitution for access; and watching every motion of the heart to gain admittance: being himself ever affable and easy of access to all that seriously applied to him; accepting any invitation, and admitting every instance of respect; nay, making a voluntary tender of his company whenever he knew it would be seasonable and acceptable; indulging the most secret wish of such as would receive an obligation from him, and enhancing that by his engaging readiness to confer it.

He submitted to the lowest offices for the sake of others, and was at every body's service that desired his assistance. He condescended to the meanest company, when he had a prospect of doing any good for them; and was content to lose the reputation of being a good man, that he might the more effectually serve the ends of piety and goodness.

His conversation was free and familiar, open and undisguised, sober and rational: his carriage clear from all affected singularity, all rigid and unnatural severity, and any of those austere forbidding airs, which are used to be put on by some others, and were apt to procure them so much awe upon the like occasion. His very miraculous works were no less evident signs of mercy, goodness, generosity, than of power; and equally adapted to convince the understandings and engage the affections of those who beheld them, as to remove their maladies, or to relieve their wants; his first public miracle being no more than a proper act of kindness or humanity, in preventing the confusion of a poor relation, by a very seasonable supply of what was wanting in his entertainment, which want perhaps could not have otherwise been supplied, and was most probably occasioned by the extraordinary concourse he himself drew thither.* His last miracle was an instance of the highest and most undeserved compassion, in calmly healing the wound of one of

* John ii. 1, 2.

those who came with eagerness† to take away his life; and at the same time showing that with the same ease he could have delivered himself or destroyed his enemies.

The like might be observed in almost every other case, where he exerted an extraordinary power, which he did in a manner that more peculiarly suited his own character.

But what we are now considering in the life of Christ, is its more ordinary course and common tenor, which we find chiefly conversant in social duties, as these come into use most frequently, and are of the greatest benefit to mankind; and setting us a pattern of performing these, which was the most inviting to us, the most imitable by us, and the least capable of ever being mistaken or perverted: a pattern not only of perfect innocence, but likewise usefulness in every circumstance and situation; of joining sometimes in such relaxations both of mind and body, as would tend to the comfort and support of each; such prudent, moderate enjoyment of the good things of this world, as might convert them both to the present and future benefit of all those who par-

† Malchus had come out with violence to apprehend him, and had perhaps treated him with some peculiar insolence so as to provoke Peter to cut off his ear. He is supposed to be one of those servants who smote Christ upon the face, Mark xv. 65. even after a miraculous power had been exerted in his favour.

took of them: of undergoing all the toils and difficulties, labours and distresses to which we are subject; of bearing all the evils and afflictions, the crosses and calamities of life, with so much patience, constancy and perseverance, as would prevent our sinking under them; and at length make us more than conquerors over them. He exhibited a pattern of particular affection and esteem for friends; of general kindness and good will towards enemies; of gratitude and love for each good office; of meekness and a most forgiving temper under any ill usage; of obedience to superiors, so far as is consistent with our duty to the supreme governor;* of mildness and condescension to inferiors; of justice, fidelity, benevolence and charity to all. In short, his whole life was a lecture of true practical philosophy, and each part pointed out some virtue proper for our imitation. For this we have the testimony of unbelievers themselves. “In Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a becoming modesty and sobriety, just and honest, upright and sincere; and above all, of a most

* In proof of this, besides the instance already given of his most scrupulous exactness to avoid the least appearance of intruding on another's office, we may observe, that when he is obliged to expose the great hypocrisy and villainy of the Jewish doctors, who were the most injurious adversaries of his cause, he carefully distinguishes between their authority or commission, and the exercise thereof; between their public teaching, and their practice.

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gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man; in whose mouth was no guile; who went about doing good, not only by his ministry, but also in curing all manner of diseases among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature when in its native purity and simplicity; and shewed at once what excellent creatures men would be, when under the influence and power of that gospel which he preached unto them.”*

Which brings me in the next place to his manner of teaching; and this was likewise the most natural and easy that could be imagined. He generally draws his doctrine from the present occasion, the conversation that is passing, or the objects that surround him; from the most common occurrences and occupations; from the time of the day, the season of the year, the service of the Jewish synagogue,† or their solemnities: from some extraordinary accidents, remarkable places or transactions, and the like.

Thus, in curing a blind man, he calls himself the light of the world, and admonishes the Pharisees of their spiritual blindness and inexcusable obstinacy, in refusing to be cured and enlightened by him.‡ On little children being brought to him, he recommends the innocence and humility of that state as

* Chubb.

† Thus he alludes sometimes to the manner of teaching there, Matt. x. 27.

‡ John ix. 5, 39. 41.

very proper qualifications for all those who would become true members of his church; and under the same figure intimates the privileges that belong to all such.* On being told that his mother and brethren came to seek him, he declares to all those among his disciples who were desirous of learning, and disposed to follow his instructions, that they were equally dear to him, and should be equally regarded by him, as his very nearest friends and relations.† Beholding the flowers of the field, and the fowls of the air, he teaches his disciples to frame right and worthy notions of that providence which supports them, and therefore will support beings of a rank so much superior to them.‡ Observing the fruits of the earth, he instructs them to judge of men by their fruits, and not to be themselves unfruitful, under all the means of grace.§ Taking notice of their behaviour at a feast, he first gives general advice therein to both the master and his guests: to the one, that he should direct his munificence to such as stood most in need of it;¶ to the other, that they beware of that affectation of place and distinction which was so troublesome to the

* Mark x. 14, 15. Matt. xviii. 4, 5, 6, 10.

† Matt. xii. 47. Mark iii. 32.

‡ Matt. vii. 26. 28. Luke xii. 24, &c.

§ Matt. vii. 16. Luke vi. 43, &c.

¶ This is all that Christ can be supposed to mean, Luke xiv. 12, 13, when in his way of instructing occasionally, and by a special instance then before him, he exhorts his followers when they make a feast to call the poor, the maimed, &c.

rest, and generally ended in their own mortification; and afterwards brings them to the consideration of a better entertainment, to which they were all invited; but of which few among them would be persuaded to render themselves worthy.* From meat and drink he leads them to the eating of his body and drinking his blood, in a spiritual sense; the being nourished with his doctrine, and partaking of his kingdom.† From outward washing, to the purifying of the heart and cleansing the affections.‡ From tasting of the fruit of the vine, after the Paschal supper, to the celebration of an eternal festival of freedom, rest, and happiness in another world.§ From the salt, he takes occasion to acquaint them with the nature of their office, which was to season the minds of men, and keep them from the contagion of this world, as well as give them a true

* Luke xiv. 7. 16. Thus, probably, a wedding procession passing by gave occasion to the beautiful parable of the ten virgins.

† John vi. 31. 53, &c. See a like allusion on the mention of meat, John iv. 32. The same thing in all probability occasioned that remarkable answer to the Syrophœnician woman, Matt. xv. 26; Mark vii. 27, in which he calls the heathen dogs, not in conformity to his own sentiments, but to the common language of the Jews; glancing, perhaps, as he spoke it, at those who sat at table with him, and thereby secretly reproofing the insolence of such harsh language and hard thoughts.

‡ John xiii. 8.

§ Matt. xxvi. 29. Luke xxii. 17, 18.

taste and relish for the enjoyments of that kingdom; and at the same time reminds them of the absolute necessity of this for their duly executing this their office; otherwise, instead of being the best, the purest, and most useful, they would become the most worthless and most incurable among mankind.* Those that were fishers he teaches how to catch men;† and shows them how much this would resemble their former employment, in taking of all kinds both bad and good, which were at first inseparable, but would at length be carefully distinguished from each other.‡ Seeing the money changers, he exhorts his disciples to lay out their talents to the best advantage.§ Being among the sheepfolds, he proves himself to be the true shepherd of souls, describing the particulars in which his character exactly answered that of a good shepherd, even so far as to the giving or laying down his life for the good of his sheep,|| *i. e.* exposing himself to certain death in the protection and defence of his flock from beasts of prey. Among vines, he discourses on the spiritual husbandman and vinedresser; and draws a parallel between his vineyard and the natural one.¶ At the sun-rising, he says, I am the light of the

* Mark ix. 50. Luke xiv. 34.

† Luke v. 10. Mark i. 17.

‡ Matt. xiii. 47.

§ Matt. xxv. 27. Luke xix. 23. 45.

|| John x. 11. 15.

¶ Matt. xxvi. 30. John xv. 1.

world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. As if he had said, "The sun rises to set again in a few hours, and may fail many of you, ere you have finished your journey: but every one that receives and governs himself by my doctrine, shall have a constant and continual guide, sufficient to direct him to eternal life." Upon the appearance of summer in the trees before him, he points out equally evident signs of his approaching kingdom.† At the season of fruits, he puts the Jews in mind that the time was come when some would be expected from them, in return for all the labour that had been bestowed upon them; and intimates the judgment that would shortly overtake all such among them as were found to be unprofitable.‡ When the harvest comes on, he reminds them of the spiritual harvest, or the gathering of his church among them; admonishes them to labour diligently in that work, and add their prayers to heaven for success.§ From their slaves having been lately made free on the sabbatical year, he takes occasion to proclaim a greater and more noble freedom from the slavery of sin and bondage of cor-

† Luke xxi. 29. Matt. xxiv. 32.

‡ Matt. xxi. 33. Luke xiii. 6.

§ Matt. ix. 38. Luke x. 2. A like comparison between the season of a spiritual harvest and some circumstances in the natural one, occurs John iv. 35, 36. "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." In which words Jesus alludes to the number of Samari-

ruption.* And from the Jewish ceremony of fetching water on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, in commemoration of the miracle wrought for their fathers in the thirsty wilderness; he introduces an offer of that true living water, which should be unto them a well springing up unto everlasting life, the gospel of immortal happiness and salvation, and the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive.† Upon a report that certain Jews were massacred by the Roman governor in the midst of their devotions, and that others had lately met with a no less untimely death by the fall of a tower in Jerusalem, he guards his audience against the common vices of pride and censoriousness, in judging such as these to be the greatest sinners, because they were the most eminent sufferers, and exhorts them all to repent of their own crimes, before the divine judgments overtook them, which would shortly fall upon that people, and be the more distinguishable, as coming attended with the very same circumstances.‡ From Herod's late rashness in having led his army out to meet the king of Arabia, who came against him with superior forces, and defeated him, a lesson is laid

tans coming to him, and who now began to appear in sight. He points towards them, and calls upon the apostles to behold the agreeable sight and consider his approaching harvest.

* John viii. 32.

† John vii. 37, &c.

‡ Luke xiii. 1. 5.

down to all who entered on the Christian warfare, that they should first well weigh and carefully compute the difficulties that attended it, before they were engaged in a matter of such consequence.* From the robberies which were more particularly frequent in that age and place,† he forms a beautiful story of a certain traveller, who fell among thieves, was stripped and wounded, and could find relief from none of his own country or persuasion; but met with it in one of those from whom he had the least reason to expect any, as being so much used to despise and hate that people and their way of worship.‡ From whence he forces his opponent to approve this amiable instance of humanity, even in the odious character of a Samaritan; and thereby shews him incontestably that the like good office would no less become a Jew in the like circumstances:§ and from what happened about that time, namely, that those who obtained the kingdom of Judea went to Rome to be confirmed in it; and on their return called such to account as had been wanting in their duty, and

* Luke xiv. 31.

† So many robberies and murders were committed on this road, which lay through a kind of wilderness between Jerusalem and Jericho, that Jerom tells us it was called the Bloody Way.

‡ That this notorious enmity between the Jews and Samaritans was then carried to the greatest height, at least by the former, appears wherever mention is made of the latter. Vid. John viii. 48. Luke ix 53.

§ Luke x. 30, &c.

took ample vengeance on those who rebelled against them (which was the case under Archelaus, a few years before our Lord delivered that parable); he gives his followers to understand, that after he had ascended into heaven, and taken possession of his heavenly kingdom, he would come again in power and great glory, and not only punish that rebellious nation of the Jews, with exemplary judgments, but at length condemn all those who wilfully opposed his gospel, as well as those who continued to neglect and disregard it.* Such was our Saviour's constant method, that whenever men proposed to him any curious question, or related to him any particular fact or event, in expectation of having his observations upon it, he constantly turned the matter before him into an occasion of giving some practical instructions to the persons themselves with whom he was conversing.

But I proceed with the general detail of his allusions to the things present, which is laid down by an excellent author : and though it may look like repeating some of the articles above, yet I trust the insertion of it here will be excused on account of the different applications made and the variety of uses pointed out.

“ In the spring our Saviour went into the fields, and sat down on a mountain, and made that discourse which is recorded in St. Matthew, and which

* Luke xix. 12.

is full of observations arising from the things which offered themselves to his sight: for, when he exhorted his disciples to trust in God, he bade them behold the fowls of the air, which were then flying about them, and were fed by Divine Providence, though they did not sow nor reap, or gather into barns; he bade them take notice of the lilies of the field which were then blown, and were so beautifully clothed by the same power, and yet toiled not like the husbandmen, who were then at work. Being in a place whence they had a wide prospect of a cultivated land, he bade them observe how God caused the sun to shine, and the rain to descend, upon the fields and gardens even of the wicked and ungrateful: and he continued to convey his doctrine to them under rural images; speaking of good trees, and corrupt trees; of wolves in sheep's clothing; of grapes not growing upon thorns, nor figs on thistles; of the folly of casting precious things to dogs and swine; of good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. Speaking at the same time to the people, many of whom were fishermen, and lived much upon fish, he says, what man of you will give his son a serpent, if he asks a fish? Therefore, when he said in the same discourse to his disciples, Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden; it is probable that he pointed to a city within their view, situated upon the brow of a hill. And when he called them the salt of the earth, he alluded perhaps to the hus-

bandmen who were manuring the ground: and when he compared every person who observed his precepts to a man who built a house upon a rock, which stood firm, and every one who slighted his word, to a man who built a house upon the sand, which was thrown down by the winds and floods; when he used this comparison, 'tis not improbable that he had before his eyes, houses standing upon high ground, and houses standing in the valley, in a ruinous condition, which had been destroyed by inundations."

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Going from Bethany to Jerusalem with his disciples, as they passed over a mountain, he said, If ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. Matt. xxi. 21. When he says, Luke xxii. 25, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors; he alludes to the vanity of some wicked princes of those times, who deserved the title of robbers much better than of benefactors. When the woman of Samaria, John iv. wondered that he should ask water of her, he took occasion to represent his doctrine under the image of living water, or water which flows from a spring. When he was by the sea shore, Matt. xiii. he spake three parables to the people concerning a sower, because it was then probably seed time, as others have observed. At the time of the passover, alluding to it, he says, John v. 24, He that heareth my word is passed from death unto life. When he speaks of the fig tree, which had

borne no fruit for three years, and was to be cut down, if it produced none the next year, he alluded perhaps to the time that he had spent in preaching to the Jews, as well as to their obstinacy, and to the punishment which would follow it.

Many more instances might be given, where Christ has formed his arguments and exhortations on such things as offered themselves to him; applying each most happily to his present purpose: and where this does not so immediately appear, we have reason to believe it is chiefly owing to the omission of some circumstances in the history. It may be farther observed, that Christ is no less easy and intelligible to his auditors, by alluding in a familiar way to all their customs, proverbs, maxims, &c.; speaking always precisely in the character of a Jew, and in exact conformity to what such understood at least, and had been most used to; what had been described or appointed in their sacred books. Thus he takes the very form of his first sermon on the mount, from those blessings and cursings on two mountains, the publishing of which was enjoined to the Israelites, upon their entrance into the Holy Land.* The same method he continues to the last, when on the cross he begins to repeat, or as it were gives out, the 22d psalm, which so very clearly describes the suffer-

* Duet. xxvii. 28. Jos. viii. Matt. v. and Luke vi. 24. The manner of this solemnity has been described at large by some of their writers.

ings and death of the Messiah; which prophecy he was at that very time fulfilling, and thereby ascertaining and appropriating this character to himself.*

Hence, lastly, we may observe the necessity for a careful attention to the particular occasion, time and place, as well as the situation, posture, gesture, &c. in which our Saviour spake, in order fully to comprehend the propriety, the force and beauty of his discourses, which should remind us of the allowances that ought in justice to be made for the seeming uncouthness of some things in them at this day, and make us sensible of the value of those authors, who throw so much light on several passages of scripture, by endeavouring to supply them.†

* Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 34. That a whole psalm or song is sometimes referred to by reciting the first words of it, may be gathered from Exod. xv. 1, &c. compared with v. 21. To which may be added, that his very last words, Luke xxii. 46, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," are those of Ps. xxxi. 5.

† I shall beg leave to add an instance of this kind, where our blessed Saviour's conduct does not seem to have been sufficiently understood for want of attending to the circumstances above mentioned. John viii. when the woman, said to be apprehended in adultery, is brought before our Lord, merely with the malicious view of drawing him into a difficulty, whatever determination he should give, v. 6, we find him stooping down and writing on the ground. Where it is observable that he does nothing but in as exact conformity as the place would admit to the trial of the adulterous wife prescribed by God in Numb. v. 11, &c. where the priest was to stoop down and

And thus did Christ make every object and event serve for a constant monitor and remembrancer of his instructions, which by these means must be the more easily apprehended and retained, than they could be in any artificial method whatsoever.

Again, it is observable, that he delivered many things by way of story, or parable: a most engaging and a most effectual method of instruction; gradually informing those who in reality were disposed for information, and not too violently disgusting those who were not. This way of teaching is of all others most apt to raise and keep up the attention, and set each faculty of the mind on work. It gains the easiest admission into both head and heart; it strikes the

take some of the dust from the floor of the tabernacle, v. 17; and likewise write out the curses denounced upon that occasion, v. 25. By that act, therefore, Christ declares himself willing to take cognizance of this affair, if they were willing to abide the consequence, viz. according to their own traditions, to be involved in the same curse if they proved equally guilty: on which account this way of trial was abolished by the Sanhedrim about that very time—since that sin, say the Jews, grew then so very common. It is likewise probable that Christ might by his countenance and gesture show these hypocrites how well he was aware both of their ill design in thus demanding judgment from him, and of their own obnoxiousness to the same punishment which Moses' law appointed for that crime, and which through a pretended zeal they took upon themselves the power of executing, though they were no less guilty of the very same sin, as is most probably implied in his words to them.

deepest, sticks the longest, gives the most delight, by leaving something for the hearers themselves to discover; and disoblige least by putting them upon making their own application. On these accounts, it has been admired in all ages and nations of the world, and was particularly celebrated in the East. “It was the custom of the wise men among the ancients, to clothe their instructions in apt stories and suitable comparisons: this they did at once to please and to instruct; to excite men’s attention by gratifying their curiosity, and to quicken their memory by entertaining their fancy. Our Saviour took this method to recommend his weighty instructions, and make them sink deeper into the minds of his auditors. The same method was likewise proper for another purpose, viz. to deliver some of the mysteries of the gospel with a degree of obscurity and reserve; which he did both to excite men’s industry in searching further into the deep things of God, and withal to punish the sloth and negligence of those who grudge taking any pains to learn God’s will and their own duty. This reason our Saviour himself assigns, why he speaks to the multitude in parables, Matthew xiii. 10, &c.—Among many other excellent uses to which Christ applied this method, in a manner the most delicate and masterly, it was peculiarly fitted to insinuate such points as more immediately opposed the inveterate prejudices or depraved inclinations of all those to whom he preached, and which, though

necessary for them to be apprised of, so far as might help afterwards to reconcile their thoughts to these things, when they were able to recollect that they had been intended, and foretold from the beginning; yet were not at that time to be laid down in a more open, direct manner; such as related chiefly to the external circumstances of his person and doctrine, and the effects thereof upon both Jew and Gentile.

As to the fundamental parts of his religion, and his manner of declaring them, both these were easy and obvious, such as the weakest and most ignorant, unless affectedly so, could not mistake, and proposed in that plain, popular way to which they were the most accustomed, and in which they would be most likely to apprehend him. The eastern writers are well known to abound with brief maxims, parabolic or proverbial expressions, and extremely popular forms of speech; in which such a dry way of reasoning and discoursing, such a minute detail of circumstances and restraining clauses, as is in use with us, would have been little relished or regarded, and which style of theirs might be easily justified in point of certainty and perspicuity; since, to one who is tolerably well acquainted with it, the main drift lies commonly very obvious under all these strong and significant, however highly figurative and bold expressions: nor is there any great difficulty in supplying all the proper qualifications which of course arise in every subject; and will have an allowance

made for them so long as either common sense or common equity and candour is admitted. And it is worth remarking, that wherever Christ's words seem capable of different senses, we may conclude that to be the true one, which lay most level to the comprehension of his auditors ; allowing for those figurative expressions which were so very frequent and familiar with them, and which therefore are no exception to this general rule, this necessary canon of interpretation, which of all others, I think, wants most to be recommended.

The bulk of his doctrine was purely practical, always highly pertinent to the case in hand, and of an immediate and apparent tendency to the most beneficial purposes ; and he is so far from seeking reputation by an artful and elaborate manner of explaining it, that he seems barely to propose each point, together with its proper sanction, and leaves it to shine forth by its own light. 'Tis neither versed in any nice, subtle speculations, nor involved in pompous paradoxes, nor adorned with flowers of rhetoric. We find it free from all ostentatious and unnatural flights, as well as from that load of superstitious rites and slavish ceremonies, which encumbered every other system ; consisting of solid and substantial duties ; containing general comprehensive rules to try them by, and grounded on such never-failing principles of action, as must enable his disciples to determine for themselves, and judge aright in each particular case ; as for instance, in

that of the sabbath ; which, like all other solemnities, was instituted for the sake of man ; and therefore should be made subservient to his good , and in that, to the glory of his Maker, which are inseparable from each other.

In meats and drinks, and every thing, by consequence, of the same kind, which, as being merely external things, must likewise be of an indifferent nature, and therefore could not of themselves defile a man.* In that of oaths, the several kinds of which were all really of the same import, as including the same virtual appeal to God; and therefore must needs be of equal force, and should alike exclude all fraudulent, evasive artifices.† In that of vows, which bind only to things otherwise innocent at least, and by which none ever could exempt themselves from duties of a prior and perpetual obligation.‡ In that of contracts, which confer a strict right to the thing contracted for, more especially the great, general one of matrimony, which ought not rashly to be violated by either party, or dissolved for any cause less than such a one as must prove inconsistent with the very foundation and original end of it, such as fornication or adultery.§ And by that universal rule of mercy being preferable to sacrifice, whenever a moral and a positive precept interfere with one another.¶

Such doctrine must appear not only excellent in

* Matt. xv. 11. Mark vii. 15.

§ Matt. v. 32.

† Matt. xxiii. 16. &c.

¶ Matt. ix. 13. xii. 7.

‡ Matt. xv. 6. Mark vii. 11.

itself and taken independently, but more especially so in the circumstances under which it was delivered; as fully obviating the several false maxims and fallacious glosses advanced by the Jewish teachers of our Saviour's time; in which respect it must be doubly useful, as an instruction in several truths of the last importance, and a guard against so many popular errors; and may be considered as another instance of his exquisite manner of accommodating things, both to the general benefit of mankind, and the particular exigencies of his hearers.

Lastly, our Saviour's way of arguing must carry something of a peculiar force and poignancy along with it, and be attended with extraordinary degrees both of conviction and astonishment; as he knew thoroughly what was in man, and therefore could speak to his heart directly,* as he saw into the most secret thoughts and purposes of all those whom he had to deal with; and often showed them plainly that he did so, by removing the latent prejudices of his weaker friends; and obviating the doubts and difficulties as they arose in their own minds, before they durst give utterance to them. By answering such objections as had been made only in private, or out of his hearing: by refuting every plausible pretence, and laying open the most artful stratagems of his subtle adversaries; detecting their hypocrisy, exposing their true aim, and thereby cutting off all possibility of reply: on

* Matt. ix. 4. xii. 25. Mark iii. 5. ix. 33—35. Luke v. 22, xi. 8. ix. 47. xi. 17. John vi. 61. 70. xvi. 6. 30.

which account, his words must needs be quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. In this respect it might well be said, "never man spake like this man." Many instances of which will occur upon a diligent perusal of the gospel.

Thus did Christ live and teach; showing himself superior to the rest of the world, as much in each of these respects as he was in his miracles.

There was an extraordinary man among the Greeks, who has often been compared to Christ, there being a resemblance between them in some very remarkable particulars. Socrates, like Christ, lays out all his time in going about to admonish and reform his countrymen; which he assures them was a ministry enjoined him by the Deity for their benefit, to whom he supposes himself given, or sent by God; with the utmost firmness bearing all the injuries, and despising the affronts to which he was continually exposed on that account. He frequently resorts to places of public concourse, and generally grounds his discourses on what occurs there, making use of every place, and season, and occasion, to exercise and inculcate his philosophy. He chooses a state of poverty, to clear himself of all suspicion of any private interest, and make his character more unexceptionable, by showing that he himself practised what he taught. He avoids meddling with the affairs of the public, declines posts of authority amongst his fellow-citizens: such in those bad times must have precipitated his fate, before he had done them any considerable service. He perseveres in sift-

ing and examining their prejudices, in order to detect their ignorance and presumption, and to mortify their pride, on all occasions, and declares that he must persevere in the same course, even when he clearly foresaw that the loss of his life would certainly attend it: nay, that he would continue this course, though he were to die ever so often for it. When merely out of envy, he is delivered up to his enemies, and on a most malicious prosecution brought to his trial, instead of having recourse to the usual way of supplication, and applying to the passions of his judges, he proves to them, that they ought not to admit of any such application; he informs their reason, and appeals to their consciences; and proceeds so far in his own defence, as would be just sufficient to assert his innocence, and show them the great sin of persecuting and oppressing it.

Instead of using, or permitting, any other means to avoid his death, he signifies that it was free and voluntary in him, because it had become necessary for the world, and meets the instruments of it with the utmost calmness and serenity.

He left none of his philosophy in writing, but took good care, as he said, to imprint it deeply in the hearts of his disciples, which some of them delivered down to us, though in a manner very different from that simplicity and strict propriety with which the gospels are recorded, and indeed the effects which his instructions and example had upon them were prodigious.

Some other circumstances might be pointed out, were we to draw a parallel between them, considered as

public teachers: but notwithstanding any such, and without derogating from the character of Socrates, we still may affirm, that he was far surpassed by Christ, as well in the importance of the doctrines taught by him, as in the candid, clear, convincing manner of delivering them, and in that purity and general perfection which distinguish christianity from any other system of religion.

From these slight strictures on a character justly reputed one of the most upright and complete among mere men; when it is placed in opposition to that of Christ our Lord, it is easy to distinguish which has the advantage, as is freely owned by some modern unbelievers. The same thing would appear more clearly, were the latter to be drawn out at large, and exhibited together with any other of the most celebrated legislators or professors of philosophy. But such a comparative view seems to be little necessary to its illustration.

And I content myself with only touching on some few of those remarkable circumstances in the life of Jesus, which were recorded by his first disciples, as the evidences of his being the Son of God, which brought such multitudes to believe on him at that time, and which one would think sufficient to produce the same belief in every age, as they have actually done both with the generality wherever they have been fairly offered to them, and with the best and wisest men, who have given themselves leave duly to reflect upon them.

Summary of the Evidence against the spurious Passage:—I. John, v. 7, 8.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, and these three agree in one."

THAT the words in italics were not written by the apostle John is proved by the following arguments :

There are no less than ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE Greek manuscript copies of this epistle, and the words are found in only THREE, viz. the Dublin, the Berlin, and a manuscript mentioned by Matthæi.

The Dublin manuscript is certainly not earlier than the fifteenth century, possibly as late as the sixteenth, and the passage is awkwardly translated from the modern copies of the Vulgate or Latin Version. It was probably interpolated in this place for the purpose of deceiving Erasmus.*

The Berlin manuscript is not original, but a mere transcript of *printed* editions; and the greater part of it, even to the typographical errors, is copied from the Complutensian or Polyglot, published by cardinal Ximenes in 1515, the remainder from Stephens. Pappelbaum has ascertained this beyond the possibility of doubt, by an accurate collation.

The manuscript of Matthæi is later than the editions of Erasmus and Beza, whose versions it contains. Matthæi indeed mentions another, written in the thirteenth century which has the text *in its margin*, and by a later hand.

These words are not found in the Syriac versions, prior and posterior, except only in the *printed* editions of the former. Tremellius inserted them *in his margin*, A. D. 1569, Gutbier

* When Erasmus published his first edition of the Greek Testament, which did not contain the disputed passage, some British divines took the liberty to inquire into the reason of the omission ; and when they understood it was owing to his not being able to find it in any ancient copy, they assured him that it was in a certain British copy, and on this authority he inserted it in his second edition.

1664, and Schaaf 1709, inserted them in their text. Neither are they found in the Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, Slavonic, nor Armenian versions. The *Vulgate* is the only version in which they are found, and there are now existing of *this version* twenty nine manuscripts, in general the oldest, the fairest, and most correct, in which they are wanting.

They are found in no Greek writer before the thirteenth century; and most of the Latin fathers down to the middle of the eighth century are silent respecting the passage. Thirty Greek and twenty one Latin authors, there is sufficient reason to believe, were ignorant of it. It is such as must have been quoted in their controversies if they had possessed it; and in several cases they have quoted the eighth verse in proof of their opinions, when they would have been much better defended by the seventh.

In the earliest editions of the English Bible these words were printed in a different character from the rest of the text, of which any one may be satisfied by inspecting the copy of that edited in the reign of Henry VIII, by the Bishops of Durham and Rochester, which is in the Philadelphia Library.

The simple fact that this passage had its origin in the Latin is indisputable; and it might be occasioned by the mystical sense in which some of the Latin fathers understood the words, *Spiritus, Aqua & Sanguis*; supposing *Aqua* to allude to the *Father*, *Sanguis* to the *Son*, and *Spiritus* to the *Holy Ghost*. But this very recondite sense not being obvious to common apprehension, it is probable that a *marginal* glossary was added (in the words of the interpolation) which by degrees found its way into the text. Marginal glosses were very common in the Latin manuscripts.

Neither the supposed truth of the doctrine which this passage contains, nor the clamours of the Catholics against those who rejected it, could induce Luther to insert a translation of it in his German Bible. But Luther had not been dead thirty years when the passage was interpolated in his translation.

A CATECHISM

FOR

YOUTH.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the composition of the following epitome of religion much use has been made of the *Protestant Catechism* originally published in French and translated into English some years ago. To have given it entire would not have been consistent with our prescribed limits, but its simplicity and comprehensiveness may well entitle it at some future period to an entire republication. The arrangement of the subjects under distinct heads, and the division of the whole into short sections (obviously important improvements) have been borrowed from it.

Something has also been taken from the Unitarian Catechism published in 1791, entitled "Practical Instructions for Youth." The matter of that publication is for the most part excellent, but it wants the advantage of conciseness, and many of the answers are so long as to be extremely burdensome to the memory of the learner; an error cautiously to be avoided.

Among other original matter, the first section will probably attract notice on account of its differing from most catechisms hitherto published. All seem to agree in the propriety of inspiring the young mind with ideas of religion, by directing it to God as a Creator; but the first subject of creating power generally pointed out is *itself*. This cannot be natural. There are certainly other objects which would

sooner attract its notice. Thus Milton thought, when he makes Adam say, on awaking into existence,

“ Straight towards heaven my wond’ring eyes I turn’d
And gaz’d awhile the ample sky—
About me round I saw hill, dale and shady woods, &c.—
Myself I then perus’d—”

And the first use he makes of the faculty of speech is to address the most glorious object of the visible creation; then, returning to the contemplation of himself, he infers the existence of a Creator.

It is hoped that the subjects will be found to succeed each other in natural order—the expressions such as not to be beyond the ordinary capacity of children of seven years old and upwards, and the sentiments no other than may be conscientiously adopted by every denomination of christians.

✻ With the impression of this catechism, printed separately from the tracts, will be given a shorter one suitable for children of an earlier age.

A CATECHISM

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS.

SECTION I.

1. **WHAT** is the name of that glorious body which gives us light and heat by day?

The sun.

2. What is that other body which shines with a milder light by night?

The moon.

3. By what general title are those innumerable sparks of light described, which overspread the skies when the sun is set?

They are called the stars.

4. When you walk abroad into the fields, what do you see?

I see earth and water, and a great variety of trees, plants, flowers, and living creatures.

5. Do you think it possible that any of these things could have made themselves?

No—they must have had some other maker.

6. Could you, or your parents, or any person you have ever seen or heard of, have made these things?

Certainly not.

7. Who then is their maker?

That great and incomprehensible being whom we call God.

SECTION II.

1. If God be the maker of all things, it follows that he is *your* maker?

Yes—it is to him I owe life and breath, and all things.

2. Must not that being, who is capable of effecting all this, be possessed of infinite *power*?

Yes—he must be powerful beyond all that I can conceive.

3. Do you not also perceive proofs of great *wisdom*?

I see day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, regularly succeeding each other, and from these, and other marks of beauty and order, I gather that God is infinitely wise.

4. Are not the effects of his *goodness* equally perceivable?

Yes—I and all other creatures continually experience it in the supply of our wants, in our constant preservation, and in every thing which makes us comfortable and happy.

5. Where is God?

God is present in every part of the universe; he knows every thing that is in heaven and upon earth; and is acquainted with all we do, or say, or think.

6. Why can we not see God?

Because God is a spirit who hath not parts or shape, and whose essence is too refined to be the object of our sight.

SECTION III.

1. Hath God given us any other means of knowing him than what are derived from the works of creation?

Yes—we learn much more of his nature, and are made acquainted with our duty to him, in the *Bible*.

2. What is the Bible ? ●

A collection of books written by wise and good men, extraordinarily enlightened and instructed by God, for the benefit of all future generations.

3. By what other names is the Bible known?

It is also called the *holy scripture*, or writing; and is divided into two parts, the *Old* and *New Testament*.

4. What doth the Old Testament contain?

It contains an account of the creation, the destruction of the world by a flood of water, the history of the Jewish nation, the poetical books of Job and Psalms, the wise instructions of Solomon in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the writings of the prophets before the time of Jesus Christ.

5. What do you find in the New Testament?

That which was written concerning Jesus Christ by his apostles, or messengers, and his first disciples, or scholars.

6. What is the meaning of the word *gospel*?

It signifies “good tidings” or news, and is applied to the teaching of Christ because it proclaimed the salvation of mankind.

7. In what manner should we treat the holy scripture?

It is necessary to read and study it with attention, to reflect seriously on what we read, and to obey all that is there commanded as far as it is applicable to our present circumstances.

SECTION IV.

1. Has God any where in the Old Testament given us distinct directions concerning our duty?

Yes—in the ten commandments which he delivered on mount Sinai to the people of Israel.

2. What is the first of these commandments?

Thou shalt worship no God but one.

3. What is the second?

Thou shalt not worship God by images, as if he had any bodily shape.

4. What is the third?

Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain, by calling on him to witness a falsehood, by profane cursing and swearing, or by any irreverent use of it.

5. What is the fourth?

Thou shalt rest one day in seven from worldly business.

6. What is the fifth?

Thou shalt honour and obey thy parents.

7. What is the sixth?

Thou shalt not commit murder.

8. What is the seventh?

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

9. What is the eighth?

Thou shalt not steal.

10. What is the ninth?

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

11. What is the tenth?

Thou shalt not covet any thing that belongs to another person.

SECTION V.

1. Did not the prophets foretel the appearance of another person in the world for the purpose of giving mankind farther instructions in their duty to God and stronger motives to the practice of it?

Yes—and this person was *Jesus Christ*. They foretold the time and place of his birth, many circumstances relating to his life and death, and the glorious and triumphant spread of his doctrine.

2. What is the meaning of those names which are applied to him?

Jesus signifies a Saviour, and *Christ* is a surname which signifies the Anointed or the Messiah, and on this account he was called the Son of God—his well beloved and only-begotten Son.

3. In what circumstances did he appear?

His parents were persons of a low condition, he himself lived in poverty, and was sometimes destitute of common necessities.

4. Why did Christ live in poverty and meanness?

Because he came to suffer; and to teach us not to pay too great a regard to the pleasures or to the men of this world.

5. Whom did Christ choose to be witnesses of all he did, and to collect his instructions?

He chose twelve men who were called Apostles: that is, those who were *sent* by him.

6. What sort of men were they?

They were taken from the common rank of the people, had not enjoyed the advantages of education, and obtained their living by common employments.

7. Why did Christ make choice of such persons

rather than those who were more distinguished in the world?

To make it evident that his religion depended not for its establishment on the skill or power of men, but that it derived all its strength from God.

SECTION VI.

1. In what respect was Jesus Christ superior to all the prophets who came before him ?

In the authority with which he was invested, in the perfection of his example, in the purity of his precepts and in the importance of the motives by which he enforced them.

2. What summary—or brief contents—did he give of the ten commandments.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

3. What else did he teach?

That God should be worshipped in spirit and in truth—that we should forgive our enemies, and that then we may hope for the forgiveness of our offences against God—and that at a certain day all the dead should be raised to life again, and be rewarded or punished according to their works.

4. By what signs, independent of the purity of his life and doctrine, hath Christ proved that he was sent of God?

He performed many miracles, as giving sight to the blind, healing by a word all sorts of disorders, appeasing tempests, and raising the dead.

5. Did the Jews, his countrymen, yield to this evi-

dence and receive him as the Messiah whom their prophets had foretold?

No—they hated him because he reprovèd them for their vices, and accused him of a design to set up a kingdom in opposition to that of Cæsar the Roman emperor.

6. What was the consequence of this accusation?

He was condemned to death by crucifixion, a punishment inflicted only on the vilest slaves and malefactors.

SECTION VII.

1. Did Christ continue in the state of the dead?

No—he was restored to life on the third day by the mighty power of God, as he had frequently declared he should be.

2. Who were witnesses of his resurrection?

His Apostles and a great number of other persons.

3. Were they well assured that it was really Christ who rose again?

Yes—they saw him frequently, heard him speak, discoursed with him, and ate and drank with him.

4. Did he continue long on earth after his resurrection?

He remained forty days, and was then taken up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.

5. What is meant by that expression?

It is an ancient method of speaking which signifies that God hath bestowed great authority upon Christ.

6. Were any intimations given of his coming again, and for what purpose?

Agreeably to his own predictions, to the declara-

tion of angelic messengers at the time of his ascension, and, the preaching of his apostles, we assuredly expect that he will return to call the dead from their graves, and to judge the world in righteousness.

SECTION VIII.

1. Into how many principal branches may our duty as christians be divided?

Into *three*—our duty to God, to mankind, and to ourselves.

2. What is our duty to God?

To love and honour him above all, and to express these dispositions by adoring and praising him, by praying to him, by obedience to his commands and submission to his will.

3. Why are we to adore and praise God?

Because we are under the highest obligations to him for all that we are, all we have, and all we hope for.

4. Why should we pray to him?

Not because it is necessary to inform him of our wants, but to raise and to preserve in our minds a sense of our constant dependence on him, and a humble and cheerful confidence in his goodness.

5. Repeat the model of prayer which Christ gave his disciples.

“Our Father, who art in heaven,” &c.

6. What advantage will follow our obedience to the commands of God?

Peace in our own minds—the esteem of the wise and good among men; and the joyful hope of the favour of God and his acceptance unto life eternal.

7. How do we learn submission to the will of God?

By the sober exercise of reason—but principally by the example of Christ, who in the prospect of the most grievous sufferings said “ Father, not my will but thine be done.”

SECTION IX.

1. How are we to perform our duty to mankind?

By obedience to parents and all who have a just authority over us,

By a strict adherence to truth in our words,

By honesty and punctuality in our dealings and engagements,

By a faithful and diligent performance of the duties of family and social relations,

By universal love and good will,

By abstaining from injurious actions, and guarding against the bad dispositions of malice, envy and revenge.

2. But doth not the religion of Christ require something more than this?

Yes—it commands us to be kind even to the evil and unthankful, to return good for evil, and blessing for cursing.

3. By what consideration doth Christ urge this duty upon us?

By the example of God himself, who doth not withhold the bounties of his providence from those who are most unworthy of them.

4. Did he not also exemplify this in his own conduct?

Yes—while his enemies and murderers were fastening him to the cross he prayed “ Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

5. What excellent rule hath he left us for the cultivation and practice of these virtues?

“All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even unto them likewise.”

SECTION X.

1. What are the duties we owe to ourselves?

They may be generally comprehended under the titles of humility and self government.

2. What is humility?

It consists in not esteeming ourselves too highly, and in knowing our own imperfections and faults.

3. In what does the government of ourselves consist?

In the keeping all our appetites and passions within the bounds prescribed by reason and revelation; more particularly—In purity and chastity,

In denying ourselves any bodily gratification which would be injurious to our health or destroy our peace of mind,

In moderation in the pursuit and enjoyment of the honours, riches and pleasures of the world.

4. What end should we propose to ourselves in our search after happiness?

The attainment of such a state of mind as will prevent us from being unduly elated by prosperity, or depressed by adversity.

5. What was the conclusion of Solomon, who had the fairest opportunity for procuring and enjoying whatever might be supposed to contribute to human happiness?

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man.”

6. So that every thing we owe to our Maker, to our fellow creatures or ourselves may be comprehended under the idea of our duty to God?

Yes—for in no way can we please the greatest and best of beings so much as by doing that which will make others as well as ourselves most happy.

SECTION XI.

1. Are we able to obey the laws of God perfectly, that is, so as never to be guilty of any sin?

No—we are frail creatures, and often do what God, for our good, has forbidden; and neglect to do what he has also, for our good, commanded.

2. Will not God punish us for these things?

Certainly, if we do not repent; but if we repent God is merciful and will pardon us.

3. How do we know this?

He declared himself by Moses “the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.”

4. Was this confirmed under the gospel?

Yes—Jesus Christ uniformly represents his heavenly Father as a God of mercy, and particularly in the parable of the Prodigal Son gives the most affecting representation of the divine compassion to returning penitents.

5. Will he forgive any who are not penitents?

He will not; and awful threatenings are denounced against such.

6. What is meant by a penitent?

One who as soon as he is sensible that he has committed a sin, confesses it to God, asks his pardon for it, avoids a repetition of the offence and prays for strength to resist temptation—or if he has done wrong to man, repairs the injury to the utmost of his power.

SECTION XII.

1. What will become of us when we depart this life?

We shall go into the state of the dead; but as God hath raised up Jesus, so he will raise us up also by Jesus.

2. Why will the dead be raised?

The dead will be raised that they may appear to judgment, and be recompensed according to those things which they have done in this life.

3. By whom will he execute this judgment?

Jesus Christ who is our Saviour will also be our judge.

4. Will every man be judged for his secret as well as his open actions?

Yes—in that day the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest.

5. What will be the portion of the wicked?

They will be sentenced to an awful but righteous punishment.

6. What will be the lot of the virtuous?

God will cause them to live for ever in a state of perfect happiness.

DEFENCE

OF

UNITARIAN PRINCIPLES.

THE following passages occur in a sermon delivered before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, May, 1808, by the Rev. Archibald Alexander, and printed at the desire of the session of his own church.

Pages 11, 12, 13. “ From the signs of the times, I apprehend the danger to evangelical truth which will now arise, will be from two opposite points : from what is called *rational christianity*, and *enthusiasm*.”

“ Most of those speculative men who were lately inclined to deism, will now fill the ranks of socinianism or unitarianism, as they choose to denominate their religion. The errors of idolized reason are very dangerous, because they have for their abettors the learned and powerful of this world, and the influence of their example is very extensive.”

“ These opinions, however, are not likely to spread very widely among the common people, as they divest religion of all its awful and interesting attributes ; so that the more sincerely and fully any person becomes a convert to this system, the more indifferent he will become to all religion. But no religion will engage the attention of people generally, unless it be calculated to interest their feelings. It appears to me, therefore, that enthusiasm

is likely to spread more extensive mischief among the unlearned than any species of free-thinking. The passions excited by enthusiasm, it is true, are too violent to be lasting; but the evil produced is, nevertheless, often permanent. Enthusiasm and superstition have commonly been represented as the two extremes in religion; but to me it appears, that they are near akin, and succeed each other as cause and effect. The wild ebullitions of enthusiasm, when they subside, leave their subjects under the fatal influence of some absurd opinions, which become the creed of a *new sect*; and almost invariably such superstitious customs are adopted as are effectual to shield them from every approach of truth: so that these errors are often perpetuated for many generations, and at last only die with the extinction of the people who held them*.”

“ It is curious to observe how nearly extremes sometimes approach each other in their ultimate effects. No two things appear more opposite in their origin and operation than unitarianism and enthusiasm: the one proceeding from the pride of reason, the other from the exuberance of the imagination; the one renouncing all pretensions to

* The subsiding of the wild ebullitions of enthusiasm, according to our author, tends to the production of a *new sect*, and this *new sect* adopts, in consequence, *superstitious customs*. Can he mean to designate unitarianism by the term *new sect*, and, as the offspring of *enthusiasm*, to fasten upon it the charge of *superstition*? How then are we to understand his reasoning in the following paragraph, where unitarianism and enthusiasm are represented as opposite extremes? The whole passage seems to stand very much in need of elucidation.

divine assistance, the other professing to be guided by inspiration at every step: yet in this they agree, that they equally tend to discredit and set aside the authority of the scriptures of truth. The rationalist will not receive many of the doctrines of revelation, because they do not accord with his pre-conceived notions, which he calls the dictates of reason. The enthusiast will not submit to the authority of scripture, because he imagines that he is under the direction of a superior guide. The one makes his own reason the judge of what he will receive as true from the volume of revelation; the other determines every thing, whether it relate to opinion or practice, by the suggestions of his fancied inspiration.”

“ On the errors which arise from both these quarters we should keep a watchful eye; and against them we should make a firm and faithful stand. On the one hand, we must unequivocally deny to *reason* the high office of deciding at her bar what doctrines of scripture are to be received, and what not; and, on the other, we must insist that all opinions, pretensions, experiences, and practices must be judged by the standard of the word of God.”

On the 10th July, 1808, the following observations on the foregoing passages were delivered, immediately after the reading of Davies’s sermon on the catholic import of the christian name, at the meeting of the Unitarian Society in Philadelphia, by *R. Eddowes*.

This view of christianity, my brethren, given, with a few necessary alterations, from the works of a late minister of the presbyterian church in this country, and who was equally zealous as any of the present day for what is deemed *sound doctrine*, does the highest honour to his memory. And though none will venture to deny that he has placed the true test of a vital profession upon its proper ground, a departure from all iniquity, yet how frequently does a party-spirit warp the judgment of men, so as to make them believe it scarcely possible that *they can* be christians, *can* really depart from iniquity, whose belief happens to differ, in what they deem a material point, from their own? To find what they consider as fundamental truths, settled by high authority and receiving the sanction of long acquiescence, called in question, debated, and given up as erroneous, creates an irritation which is apt to lead to harsh reflections and unjustifiable conclusions. It will be easily understood that I allude to a discourse, lately delivered in this city, before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and committed to the press, in which some severe strictures are passed upon us, directly and *by name*.

The author, whom I do not personally know, appears to be a man of sense and erudition, and on several subjects, where his prejudices do not interfere, reasons in a manly, liberal, and convincing manner. He urges, with great propriety, the superiority of the light of revelation to that of reason, assigning, nevertheless, to the powers of the human

mind their proper office in investigating and judging of the things revealed. In his own strong language (*page 30*), "To study the sacred oracles for ourselves, and in the midst of the dust of contention, in despite of the prejudices of education and of party, to elicit the true meaning of the Holy Ghost, requires an ardent love of truth, an unwearied attention, unshaken fortitude, and invincible perseverance." In all this we perfectly agree with him; and, presuming that he did not mean by the expression, "*for ourselves*," to confine the privilege of research, or the qualifications necessary to render it effectual, to those of his own denomination or his own order, *we* lay equal claim to them, not without hope of using them to equal advantage. But he has obtruded something into our creed which he calls *idolized reason*, to which we are as much strangers as himself. Idols of every kind are our abhorrence; and we reject them under every form, whether that of reason overstepping its proper province, or of articles and confessions claiming an authority which we believe belongs to the scriptures alone, interpreted by a sound understanding. We might be justly charged with an idolatry of reason, if, as our author uncandidly insinuates, we invested it with "the high office of deciding what doctrines of scripture are to be received, and what not." This we utterly disclaim. But we do strenuously contend, that when any doctrine is proposed to us (no matter from what authority), reason may and ought to decide whether it be a doctrine of scripture or not;

nor will we concede to any man or body of men the exclusive privilege of “ eliciting the true meaning of the Holy Ghost.” No ; nor when we consider what unwarrantable liberties have been taken with the scriptures themselves, will we wave our right of inquiry, whether what comes to us under the venerable name of sacred writ be really such or not. It was precisely on these grounds that the first reformers took their stand in judging of the erroneous doctrines of the church of Rome, and set an example, which we trust will, in no future age of the world, be lost sight of ; for in departing from her communion they did not carry along with them her reputed infallibility.

Our author expresses great fears for the consequences of the errors occasioned by the idolatry of reason, “ because,” says he, “ they have for their abettors the learned and the powerful of this world, and the influence of their example is very extensive.” Dismissing, however, these apprehensions, he adds, in the very next sentence, “ they are not likely to spread very widely among the common people, as they divest religion of *all* its awful and interesting attributes.” Is there then nothing *awful* in the idea of One eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omniscient Being ; the author of our existence and of all our powers ; the constant spectator of our conduct ; acquainted with our inmost thoughts ; who will finally bring us into judgment, and be the arbiter of our condition for eternity ? Is there nothing *interesting* in the consideration that it is by his unintermitted energy our souls are

held in life; that it is by his hand we are fed and clothed; that by him we are every moment sustained in the exercise of our bodily and mental faculties? Is there nothing to engage our *willing obedience* in his condescending declarations of mercy; in the concern he hath manifested for our recovery from sin and consequent misery, by the mission of Christ? Is there nothing in that arduous undertaking for the benefit of the human race which can excite warm emotions of love and gratitude to Him, who, in submission to his Father's will, endured the cross, despising the shame? Do not our hearts beat high with the anticipation of a glorious triumph over death and the grave, when we behold Jesus raised from the dead by the power of the Most High, and exalted to glory and immortality by his Father and our Father, his God and our God? Yes! my brethren, these are solemn, *awful*, and *interesting* considerations; they are fundamental points of unitarian faith; nor is there aught in them of which the *common people*, even the poorest of them, may not experience the benefit. It was to this class of men that Christ chiefly addressed his doctrine, and they heard him gladly, because he addressed them in a way they could understand, and not as the scribes. It is the aim of the unitarian system to bring back the gospel to its primitive purity and simplicity, and to build the faith of its professors, of *every* rank and denomination, on a surer basis than the decrees of councils, synods, and assemblies. Many of these have found the gospel as it stands in the New Testament too

pure and simple to suit their purposes, and, in their endeavours to make it more *awful and interesting* to the *common people*, have only perpetuated ignorance and increased infidelity.

The author immediately adds, “ the more sincerely and fully any person becomes a convert to this system, the more indifferent he will become to all religion.” Here, my brethren, is a sweeping clause of reprobation indeed ! If it means any thing, it goes to assert that we, who were no longer able to endure the mixed worship of trinitarian churches, and instituted this society, that, in obedience to the command of God, we might pay our devout homage to him alone, are by this very act manifesting our indifference to all religion ! It follows of course that those of us who not only contribute our pecuniary quota to the maintenance of public worship here, but conduct its offices to the best of our little ability, without emolument or compensation of any kind, must be infidels of a most *uncommon* stamp !

I would wish to avoid every thing that looks like the retaliation of uncharitable expressions ; but it is impossible not to draw the conclusion that the author has proceeded upon gross misinformation, or, what is still worse, upon no information at all. Herein he has been much to blame. Before he ventured, on so solemn an occasion, to utter such an imputation upon the understandings and moral characters of any description of men, and still more before he gave it a wider spread, and in a manner made it permanent, through the

medium of the press, the truth of his premises ought to have been ascertained by every previous grade of proof. He should have thoroughly investigated the whole controversy; at least he should have attended our worship, or have made particular inquiries concerning us from those who were in the habit of doing so. In such a case he would have known, that, so far from being indifferent to revealed religion, no subject has been more frequently and warmly insisted on here than the proofs of its truth. If he had only taken the trouble to read the avowal of our principles, contained in the printed copy of our constitution, he would have found that we possess the very qualifications which he most properly recognizes as sufficient to constitute members of the visible church, viz. “a confession of Jesus as the anointed prophet of God and Saviour of mankind, and a desire to be instructed in his religion” (*page 28*). But being few in number, and of little note, and exploring our own way in religion, as well as we can, without the assistance of spiritual guides, we are set at naught; hard things are thought, and spoken, and written concerning us; and of these it is not the least, that even our sincerity is subpoenaed to give testimony against us at the bar of an orthodox assembly. Be it so: this is not the tribunal at which we are finally to be tried. There is only one authority to which we submissively bow, and before which we and those who take upon them to be our judges here must stand upon an equal footing: there may they as well as ourselves find mercy!

A
FRIENDLY DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A COMMON UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN,

AND

AN ATHANASIAN ;

*Occasioned by the former's behaviour during some
part of the public service.*

Jesus answered, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel ! the Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

MARK xii. 29, 30, 31.

When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.

LUKE xi. 2.

Athanasian. Neighbour, as I always thought you a person of a serious turn of mind, and have frequently observed your exemplary conduct in the public worship, your behaviour this day, at church, gave me great surprise, and indeed uneasiness, because you seemed to treat some parts of our excellent liturgy with disregard. You used to repeat, after the minister, the four first petitions of the litany, in a devout and solemn manner ; and to join in every part of our liturgy, so justly celebrated by great numbers of pious and learned men. But I took notice this day, at church, you put on a silent indifference, when GOD THE SON, GOD

THE HOLY GHOST, and the THREE PERSONS in the trinity were invoked ; neither did you seem to give your assent to the doxology, so frequently directed to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. You seemed likewise not to join in the latter end of those prayers which conclude with the doctrine of the trinity in unity, so plainly and solemnly established by our glorious church, and confirmed by the learned pains of many excellent writers. I should be glad to know the true reason of this surprising change ; and make no doubt but you will readily explain yourself upon these religious points, as you and I have had frequent conferences upon subjects of scripture.

Unitarian. Why, really, neighbour, I acknowledge the justness of your charge. As my sentiments are very different from those I formerly embraced, and was educated in ; so I think it my duty to act consistently with my principles, and to profess and practise, in religious matters, according to the dictates of my conscience. I now profess myself deeply convinced, by the express determination of Christ and his apostles, that the church-worship offered up to Jesus Christ, the messenger of God, and to the holy spirit, and to the trinity, as being three persons, and one God, is false and unscriptural, from whence, I think, it necessarily follows, that the famous athanasian doctrine of three co-equal persons in one God, has no foundation in the word of God.

Athanasian. Oh, my friend ! you astonish me by such a bold declaration ; and I beg of you, for

the sake of your future happiness, to take heed and beware how you run into a dangerous heresy, before you have weighed this important business with a cool and unprejudiced mind. What ! is it possible to imagine that so many wise and good men should have been so grievously mistaken, as to be guilty of false worship in their solemn address to almighty God ? Don't you know, that our liturgy was compiled by pious and learned men ; and that it has been celebrated by several excellent writers, as the most perfect and christian form of public devotion in the whole christian world ? You should, therefore, suspect arguments which have tendency to draw you off from an important part of religious worship, settled and determined by the venerable fathers of the church of England, established by acts of parliament and convocation, and strongly enforced by a pious and learned clergy.

Unitarian. I am obliged to you, my good friend, for your advice, as I am well assured it proceeds from a kind regard for my spiritual welfare. But I can seriously declare, that my conviction has not been hasty : in the course of my inquiry, I made all possible objections to the contrary doctrines, for the very reason you assign ; and I thought it strange and unaccountable, that such an excellent church should have continued so long in an error that breaks in upon the true character of the one God and Father of all, and the holy and only worship admitted, practised, and directed by Christ and his apostles. And upon the most sincere and impartial inquiry, not without earnest applications

to the God of truth, for the direction of his holy spirit in my religious disquisitions, I profess myself, an UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN, or a firm believer in one supreme God and Father of all, as a fundamental principle of revealed religion. I see with my own eyes, and perceive with my own understanding, that it is my duty to worship and pray to the one God and Father of all, in the name of, or as the disciple of Jesus Christ, for the assistance of his holy spirit and guidance ; and think it lawful to offer up petitions to none other, except the invisible and self-existent Creator and Governor of the world, the one only living and true God. As our Lord commanded no worship or prayer to be made to himself, and directed his apostles and others to pray only to God, our Father, who is in heaven, and they taught their disciples the same, surely to pay religious worship to any other must be judged, by every unprejudiced christian, as an instance of will-worship, not warranted by the word of God ; and, consequently, such unscriptural forms of devotion ought to be laid aside, though established by the authority of wise and learned men. With respect to the worship of the trinity in unity, or three persons and one God, not even the least colour of evidence can be produced for it ; every form of worship set forth by Christ and his apostles is absolutely inconsistent with it. It is certainly worshipping God under a false character, *or we know not what* (John iv. 22), when we offer up prayers to a being, consisting of three co-equal

persons, contrary to the light of reason and scripture.

Athanasian. Surely you must labour under some very great mistake, when you make such confident declarations regarding forms of worship, that have been deduced from scripture by so many learned men ; and have been defended in so many excellent books, written by persons of almost every denomination of christians, as well as of the church of England. Have you, my friend, carefully examined every part of scripture relating to religious worship ? Though my memory, at present, does not furnish me with any particular passages, where the second, third, and fourth petitions of the litany are found in express terms ; yet I am persuaded that these forms of worship are warranted by scripture, as our church, which professes the highest regard for scripture, and is founded upon it, has so long recommended and enforced the whole litany-worship : and you must allow that the church of England has been blessed with many excellent members, remarkable for their piety, as well as learning ; and, consequently, I cannot think of departing from their religious sentiments, without the clearest and strongest evidence, drawn from the word of God.

Unitarian. We of this nation ought to bless God for the inestimable advantages of the free use of the holy scriptures in the vulgar tongue. In the name of God, let every declaration of Christ and his apostles, relating to religious worship, be examined and considered with the greatest care ; and

let this important cause be determined by divine and not human authority.

My good friend, do but admit, as your protestant profession, and your seeming regard for scripture require, that the authority of Christ and his apostles is of greater weight than the decrees of even wise and learned men, and you will soon be convinced that the athanasian, or trinitarian worship is false and unscriptural. I will endeavour to point out to you a plain method of gaining entire satisfaction upon this important subject. *It came to pass that as he (viz. Christ) was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. (Luke xi. 1).* Now, the grand question is, what answer our Lord made to this reasonable inquiry? For surely it is the duty of every christian to pay a very solemn regard to the determination of Christ himself. *And he (viz. Christ) said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven, &c. (v. 2).* This is exactly agreeable to the precept he gave in his sermon on the mount; *after this manner pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, &c. (Matth. vi. 9).* It appears, then, that our Lord has plainly commanded all his disciples to worship the one God and Father of all, without any mention of himself, or of the holy spirit of God, as objects of worship.

Athanasian. Your producing the Lord's prayer is, I think, unnecessary, as all christians are uniformly agreed in it; and this prayer frequently occurs in every part of our public service.

Unitarian. But it is proper to begin with a point universally agreed upon, in order to proceed in a regular manner to the examination of those points wherein we differ. Though the Lord's prayer is so familiar to you, by frequent use, yet it is very possible that you, and thousands of others, might not have attended to the consequences naturally arising from this divine and comprehensive prayer.

In the next place, I recommend to your serious consideration part of a discourse our Lord delivered to his disciples, just before he was going to suffer a painful and scandalous death. *In that day ye shall ask me nothing: verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. At that day ye shall ask in my name.* (John xv. 23, 24, 26). Be pleased to take particular notice, that our Lord hath, in these declarations, plainly set forth the true christian form of worship, which is no other than to worship the one God and Father of all, in the name, and as the disciples, of Jesus Christ.

But here I must earnestly desire you to consider, what foundation there is for the worship of Jesus Christ, or the holy spirit of God, or three persons in one God. 'Tis impossible for the art of man to find it out, in these plain declarations of our Lord, when he was professedly speaking of the duty of his disciples, with regard to the true object of religious worship.

Athanasian. I freely grant you that the church

worship does not appear in this discourse of Christ. But does he not promise his disciples to send the holy spirit, to guide them into all truth? From whence it is not improbable that some particulars were to be revealed to them after the descent of the holy spirit, which our Lord did not think proper to communicate to them in person; so that if the church worship be rightly deduced from the declarations of the inspired apostles, it will yet stand upon a scripture foundation.

Unitarian. Let us, for the present, confine our argument to our Lord's last discourse to his disciples. If the true character of God be, a Being consisting of three co-equal persons, and it be our duty to worship him under this character, is it possible to imagine, that our Lord should take no notice of such an essential part of our religious service? As no such worship can be deduced from this, or any other discourse of our Lord, it must certainly be given up, as false and unscriptural, unless the apostles, after the descent of the holy spirit, have made it our express duty, by clear precepts and example.

But the matter of fact is demonstrated, even to the eye-sight, that the apostles offered up their usual and stated devotions to God only, through Jesus Christ. *They lift up their voice to God, saying, Lord, thou art God; grant that wonders may be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.* (Acts iv. 24, 30.) *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor. xv. 57.) The precepts relating to wor-

ship in the epistles, are to this effect : *Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him.* (Coloss. iii. 17.) In the review of *all* the forms of worship in the New Testament, will appear demonstrative evidence, that the worship of Christ, and the holy spirit, is no where warranted by the practice or precepts of the apostles : and so gross and absurd is the worship of three persons and one God, that they have not left us the most distant intimation of any such religious practice ; which you will readily perceive, when you have carefully examined all their declarations relating to the duty of worship. If it had been the will of God, that the disciples of Christ should have worshipped one God, under the character of three persons, it would have been as plainly set forth in the New Testament, as it is in the liturgy of the church of England : and, consequently, the athanasian forms of worship must appear, to all sincere Bereans, false and unscriptural, as being destitute of all support from the directions of Christ and his apostles.

Athanasian. But surely the great power and authority of Christ, who is so frequently joined together with the Father, as also the high offices which the holy spirit sustains ; and both of them being sometimes mentioned, together with the Father, as concerned in the great work of our salvation, afford good grounds for the direct invocation of them in prayer or praise ; particularly, as we are commanded to be baptized into the name of the

son and holy spirit, as well as of the Father. (Mat. xxviii. 19.) And the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) seems to imply worship to the son and holy spirit.

Unitarian. That the son is employed by God in very high offices for the salvation of mankind, every christian must readily grant, with joy and gratitude : and the promised assistance of the holy spirit is also deserving of our thankfulness. As almighty God empowered Christ to preach and make known the terms of salvation to the world ; so, after he had completed the gracious work assigned him, he received a commission to send down the holy spirit upon the apostles, to enable them to propagate the gospel through the world : the comfortable assistance of the same holy spirit of God (that is, his guidance and protection) is likewise promised to all sincere christians in the discharge of their most difficult duties. Upon this account, the disciples of Christ are commanded to be baptized into the name of the son and holy spirit, as well as of the Father. To be baptized into the name of the holy spirit, or into the belief of the extraordinary guidance and direction of the holy spirit, which was given to the apostles, cannot be of the like import with addressing ourselves to the same in prayer or praise. When this famous text in Matthew's gospel is cited, the words immediately foregoing should always be added, as being necessary to complete the sense : *all power* (that is, all power relating to the gospel dispensation) *is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, there-*

fore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the holy spirit: (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.) and consequently, the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, the son as the person to whom that power is given, and the holy spirit as the blessing of God, accompanying our endeavours, and the effectual means of our supporting our christian warfare. This power, of which Christ speaks, is that which he, in other words, calls the holy spirit; and, therefore, the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, and the son as the person to whom it is given. This seems to be the true scriptural account of this passage, about which there have been so many angry disputes, but concerning which you, and every one, must judge for himself.

The other text you mention (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) is no more than a solemn wish of the apostle Paul, that the favour of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the holy spirit, or joint partaking in the divine assistance, might be and continue with the Corinthians.

As to any doxology, or the ascribing of glory to the person of the holy spirit, it is not even pretended by learned men, that one instance of it can be produced from scripture. The New Testament lies open before you, and you may see with your own eyes, whether the common church-doxology be there or not, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy ghost.* The scripture doxologies are to this effect: *Glory to God through Je-*

us Christ. Blessing, &c. be unto him that sitteth upon the throne (viz. the one supreme God), *and unto the lamb* (that is, God's holy and innocent creature, and great instrument employed by him, for the salvation of mankind), *for ever and ever.* (Rom. xvi. 27. Rev. v. 13.)

Again ; with respect to the worship of Father, son, and holy spirit, as being one God, it is a notorious fact, not to be overthrown by all the subtle inventions of learned men through the whole christian world, that this form of worship is so far from being commanded or authorised by the sacred writers, that the worship required in the scriptures is absolutely inconsistent with it ; the one supreme God, who is generally described by the character of Father, being constantly set forth as the only object to whom all religious invocation should be directed. Nothing is more easy than for you, or for any other common christian, to determine this plain question, whether the worship of three persons and one God be in the New Testament, which you have in your hands, or whether it be not.

Athanasian. To speak impartially, your observations upon this article of religious worship appear to me of considerable weight. If the matter of fact be as you have represented it (and you very fairly refer me to the scripture itself for my complete satisfaction), I shall be obliged to give up the athanasian worship, as what cannot be defended by the word of God.

But as worship is paid to Christ in scripture, and glory is expressly ascribed to him, is not this a

very strong and conclusive argument, that Christ is equally divine, or one God, with the Father ?

Unitarian. My good friend, as you begin to see some light and evidence, which you had not observed before, I shall take a particular pleasure in employing my best endeavours to give you every possible satisfaction upon this important article of religious worship. The argument usually urged by learned men, to prove Christ's supreme divinity, is clearly and solidly answered, by the plain scripture account of the honour and worship which is to be paid to him, and which surely will be found to be very short of *divine* worship. From scripture then we learn, that we must *honour the son, because the Father hath committed all judgment unto him ;* (John v. 22. 23.) that we must *confess Christ to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father,* i. e. acknowledge his high authority from God. (Philip. ii. 10, 11.)

More particularly in the Revelation, (ch. v.) where, in a heavenly vision exhibited before the apostle John, our Lord is emblematically described as a lamb, receiving honours and worship. Be pleased, however, to observe, that the ground of these honours and worship was not his being God equal to the Father, was not because he was employed by God as an inferior instrument in the creation of the world ; but because he was thought worthy to receive this tribute of blessing and praise, as a reward for his faithful attachment to the cause of God, and his willing sufferings in confirming the truth of the gospel, for the benefit of mankind.

But this worship paid to this lamb that was slain (*i. e.* to a creature, and to a mortal creature, capable of dying), cannot be *divine* worship ; the worship to be paid to God cannot be construed into an invocation of the holy Jesus in prayer ; especially when there is no command in the scriptures for it, given by Christ himself, or by almighty God : but it must be, that worship, reverence, and respect which we pay to fellow-creatures, our superiors in worth and excellence ; worship proportionate to the highly virtuous and pious character of the blessed Jesus, and his benevolence towards us, whenever we think or speak of him ; but not to make him almighty God by praying to him.

Athanasian. My good friend, it does not become a sincere christian to withstand the evidence you have, I think, fairly produced from the word of God. The objection I made is satisfactorily answered, more especially that in the fifth chapter of the Revelation ; and I really wonder at myself, and many others who have not been so convinced before.

Unitarian. My dear christian friend, we ought to make great allowances for each other's infirmities, mistakes, and prejudices, naturally arising from various causes. Nothing is more common in human life, than even for thinking persons to receive information about things seemingly plain and obvious, and which may have escaped their notice. But the readiness you show to submit to evidence, when fairly laid before you, upon religious subjects, proceeds from an excellent temper of mind, which naturally qualifies you to receive the truth, as it

is in Jesus. As you freely grant that the athanasian forms of worship must be given up, if the fact be as I have stated it, I am willing to put the whole cause upon this short and important issue. If, upon inquiry, you can point out, by any one plain instance or precept in scripture, that it is the duty of christians to worship Christ and the holy spirit, as being each of them God, and three persons as one God, in prayer, or praise ; I shall then freely acknowledge myself to be in a religious error, and shall think myself obliged to return to the church worship, which I have carefully avoided since the time of my conviction. On the other hand, if you cannot point out any such worship, in the scriptures, you will judge yourself obliged, by your own confession, to adhere to scripture forms of worship, notwithstanding the authority of even wise and learned men ; it being an express duty required of Christ's disciples, to *obey God rather than men*.

Let it be observed, that this argument, drawn from the consideration of the term " worship," is adapted to all capacities, and absolutely demolishes the athanasian doctrine, with respect to the worship of the holy spirit ; it being impossible to conceive that this holy spirit, who is supposed by the athanasians to be of equal dignity with God, the Father, should never have one prayer directed to him, should have no glory ascribed to him in the writings of the apostles, from whom alone we can receive a faithful account of the christian dispensation.

Again ; how is it possible to imagine that it was the design of the sacred writers to fix, in the mind of christians, the belief of Father, son, and holy spirit being three persons and one God, as they have left us no example of any sort of worship directed to three persons and one God ? If this had been a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, we should not only have had it plainly and frequently expressed, but likewise solemn prayers and praises would have been addressed to God, under the character of three co-equal persons ; otherwise, the apostles themselves have left us in the dark with regard to to an essential part of christian worship. Can it enter into the heart of any serious christian to believe in earnest that it is necessary to salvation to conceive of God, as a being consisting of three persons (as is profanely and absurdly maintained in the athanasian creed, which ought to be banished from the service of all christian societies), when the apostles themselves have never made it the duty of christians to offer up prayers and praises to God, under the athanasian character ; but in all the examples of worship recorded in scripture, Almighty God is always addressed, as one supreme intelligent agent, one God and Father of all ? This essential failure in the athanasian cause has, I find, driven some of its learned defenders into this palpable absurdity, that when we pray to God, under the character of Father, the word *Father* denotes Father, son, and holy spirit ; which demonstrates the falsehood of the cause they are labouring to support : it being extremely clear

from hence, that they cannot produce one instance of worship to three persons and one God. Otherwise, men of sense and learning would not have recourse to such an expedient, as hath no other tendency than to turn the scripture into ridicule, and expose it to the scoffs of profane and sceptical men.

Athanasian. I freely allow the grand importance of this plain matter of fact, drawn from the article of religious worship. But I would just take notice of a text, that seems to imply the doctrine of a trinity in unity, though no instance of worship paid to such a being appears in scripture. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the word, and the spirit ; and these three are one.* (1 John, v. 7.)

Unitarian. Ever since I became acquainted with this subject, it has been matter of serious lamentation to me, that common christians have been so much imposed upon by the sound of this famous text, which, if written by the apostle John, is nothing to the purpose, the sense of it being evidently this ; that these three are one, as agreeing in the same testimony. But it is a matter of fact, well known to the learned, that it is a spurious, interpolated text, and has been given up, as such, by some athanasian writers ; and, consequently, this text ought not to be read in churches as the word of God. You may see every thing relating to it faithfully represented, in Sir Isaac Newton's *Letter to Mr. Le Clerc* ; in the *Defence* of the Appeal

to Common Sense, printed in octavo, 1760, p. 431; and in Mr. Lindsey's *Apology*, p. 98.

Athanasien. Without entering into the merits of this question, for which I am not qualified; if some learned professors of the trinity in unity have given up this text, as not written by the apostle John*, it must be allowed that no stress should be

* Athanasius himself never referred to this text. (Trin. Controversy Reviewed, p. 447.) Erasmus insisted that it was in no ancient manuscripts, and had never been cited by those fathers, who had disputed the most against the arians, as Athanasius, Cyril, and Hilary. (Jortin's Life of Erasmus, v. 1. p. 345.) Luther and Bullinger omitted it in their German translations of the bible. (Lindsey's Apology, p. 99.) Even "in the first English bibles after the reformation, in the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. it was printed in a different character, to signify its being wanting in the original, which distinction came afterwards to be neglected." (Clarke's Script. Doct. 3d edit. p. 232.) Dr. Wall says, "This verse is in no Greek manuscript, nor was in the bibles of the ancient christians; nor ever made use of by them in their disputes with the arians. Mill has so defended it, that he who thought it genuine before, will now conclude it to be interpolated by some Latin scribe first." (Trin. Controversy Reviewed, p. 448.) Dr. Bentley, in his famous lecture at Cambridge, when he stood candidate for the chair of regius professor of divinity, entirely gave up this text, and publicly proved it to be spurious. (Hist. Memoirs of Dr. Clarke, p. 101.) Dr. Waterland, on being asked whether Dr. Bentley's arguments did not convince him, replied, "No, for he was convinced before." Nor does the doctor, I think, ever quote that text as genuine in any of his writings. Which, says Whiston, in so zealous and warm a trinitarian, deserves to be taken notice of as a singular instance of honesty and impartiality. (Ibid. and Sykes's Connexion, p. 271.) Dr. Sykes "owns that he vehemently sus-

laid upon so controverted a passage. But after all the concessions I have made regarding the article of worship, are there not, in scripture, several high titles and attributes ascribed to the son and holy spirit, which surely have a tendency to induce christians to think them equally divine with the Father?

pects it ;” (External Peace of the Church, p. 18.) and elsewhere, that “ this text is proved spurious, if it be possible for any passage to be proved so.” (Modest Plea, p. 15.) Dr. Jortin calls it “ A spurious text, which is still maintained in bold defiance to the fullest and clearest evidence against it.” (Remarks on E. H. V. iii. p. 100.) Dr. Randolph “ has not quoted it in his vindication of the doctrine of the trinity, in answer to the Essay on Spirit, though he has collected the most considerable texts that are usually alleged to prove the athanasian doctrine.” (Trin. Controversy Reviewed, p. 448.)

Notwithstanding these, and a great number of other testimonies, Mr. Travis has addressed several letters to Mr. Gibbon, in defence of the authenticity of this text, so lately as 1784. He has however been very properly and ably reprov-
ed in some remarks published in “ Commentaries and Essays,” v. 1. p. 511—539. From whence we may finally conclude, in the words of Dr. Jortin, that “ At present, this passage and all that relates to it hath been so fully discussed, that none, except stubborn and perverse people, pretend to deny that the *heavenly witnesses* are an interpolation.” (Life of Erasmus, v. ii. p. 102.)

Mr. Porson, fellow of Trinity college, Cambridge, has finally proved the spuriousness of this text, without leaving any probability of any further vindication or reply, in his late very learned and very satisfactory *Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis, in answer to his Defence of the Three Heavenly Witnesses*, 8vo. 1790.

Unitarian. I am persuaded, that if a person who had never heard of the athanasian doctrine and worship, was to read the New Testament*, he would be surprised to find that such a doctrine and worship ever prevailed in the christian world. But (to give a direct answer to your objection, drawn from the high titles and attributes ascribed to the son and holy spirit) it is no wonder that great things are ascribed to Christ, and to the operation of the spirit or power of God, since they are frequently concerned in, or connected with, the

* When Job Ben Solomon, the African prince (who was master of the Arabic, and had acquired a competent knowledge of the English language), was in England, about fifty years ago, and was asked, after reading the New Testament, if he found three Gods there: he replied, " No, No ! ONE GREAT GOD, ONE GREAT GOOD GOD."

It is also observed, by one who lived several years familiarly with the Indians of North America, " The great article that they stick most at, is this: they exclaim against the supposition, that the divine word was shut up for nine months in the womb of a woman: and say, that it is a thing unheard of, that, for the expiation of Adam's sin, God should put God to death to satisfy himself; or that the peace of the world should be brought about by the incarnation of God, and his shameful death. They affirm that reason ought not to be controuled by any law, or put under a necessity of approving what it does not comprehend; and, in fine, that what *we* call an article of faith, is an intoxicating potion to make reason reel and stagger out of its way; for as much as the pretended faith may support lies, as well as truth, if we understand by it a readiness to believe, without diving to the bottom of things." La Honton's New Voyage to North America, v. ii. cited in Cardale's True Doctrine of the N.T. 2d. edit. p. 360.

grand work of man's salvation. But the sacred writers have taken all imaginable care to secure the supremacy of the one God and Father of all, when they speak in the highest strain of the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, and the holy spirit the comforter. With respect to the title of *God*, in some few passages ascribed to our blessed lord, it is extremely plain, from the Old and New Testament, that such title is sometimes used in an inferior sense ; Moses, magistrates, and angels being styled Gods, consistently with the acknowledgment of the supreme God ; and Christ himself, in his answer to the Jews, when they charged him with blasphemy, expressly contends for the use of the word *God* in an inferior sense. (John x. 34—36.) But, it is sufficient for my present purpose, to observe in general, that when this, and other high titles and attributes ascribed to Christ (for the holy spirit is never expressly styled God, or Lord) are collected together, and presented to the reader with all possible advantage, which is frequently done by athanasian writers ; our lord himself, and his apostles, have assured us, in the most solemn manner, that he (viz. Christ) RECEIVED his being, high titles, and attributes from God the Father ; that God advanced him to high dignity and honour, upon account of his perfect righteousness, and obedience unto death (see Philip. ii. 8, 9, &c.) ; and that the whole redounds to the glory of God, the Father.

This plain and solemn account effectually overthrows the argument usually drawn from the most pompous recital of our lord's high titles and attri-

butes : it being absolutely impossible that the supreme God should have any thing *given* him by any being whatever. For, according to the unanswerable declaration of the apostle Paul: *Who hath first GIVEN to him* (viz. God), *and it shall be recompensed to him?* *For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.* (Rom. ii. 35, 36.) From whence it follows, with demonstrative evidence, that Christ, who was *given* by Almighty God, who *received his all from God*, is a person, in his most exalted state, inferior to the one supreme God and Father of all. And the argument holds still stronger with regard to the holy spirit; which was bestowed and sent from heaven, according to Christ's promise, and the commission he had received from his God and Father, to furnish the apostles with extraordinary gifts, and to render them qualified for their important work.

Add to this, that there are, in the New Testament, about *two hundred and forty* passages, wherein Christ is declared to be inferior to almighty God. The expressions relating to this point are plain and clear, incapable of any other sense, without violence and distortion. On the other hand, there is only the sound of *one* text, which seems to set forth Christ's equality with the Father, and the sound is entirely owing to a false translation : (viz. Philip. ii. 6.) *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; the words should be rendered thus, *who being in the form of God* (i. e. endowed with divine pow-

ers), *was not eagerly desirous to be like unto God* (i. e. to display those powers). Be pleased to read the eleventh verse, and then determine, by the principles of common sense, whether a person equal to the supreme God can be raised to higher dignity than he was before.

Again ; what demonstrates the falsehood of the athanasian doctrine, beyond a possibility of doubt, is, that there are about *forty* passages, wherein the three persons of the trinity are mentioned together, who are sometimes styled the *Father, son, and holy spirit* ; or, *the Father, the son, and the spirit* ; *the living God, Christ, the spirit* ; *God, the son of God, the holy spirit* ; *God, the lord, the spirit* : but not one passage appears, where the Father, the son, and the holy spirit, are said to be the one God, as determined by the athanasian creed. On the other hand, the Father is called *God, the living God*, and sometimes *the one God*, expressly distinguished from the son and holy spirit. You must, in this place, either give up the plain declarations of scripture, or the athanasian doctrine, they being, when fairly compared together, absolutely inconsistent with each other.

I will conclude with a plain scripture fact, relating to the character of the supreme God. There are in the New Testament *four hundred and forty one* passages, wherein God, the Father, is styled *the one*, or *only God*, or *God* absolutely by way of eminence and supremacy ; or God with some peculiar high titles, epithets, or attributes. Upon the whole, the sacred writers have

taken all imaginable care to maintain the supremacy of the *one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*; it proceeding entirely from his boundless love and mercy, that our lord was appointed to teach his mind and will, and that he bestowed his spirit, or extraordinary power, upon him for that purpose.

Athanasian. I heartily thank you, my good friend, for the pains you have taken to set me right on this important point. I cannot help acknowledging that you proceed in a rational way, and that your arguments seem justly drawn from scripture, interpreted by reason. If there be such a number of texts in the New Testament, clearly setting forth the sense you have contended for, under the three last heads of your discourse, the athanasian cause is certainly demolished. Surely it must have cost you a vast deal of time and labour to collect such a number of texts, and range them in proper order. I am determined to give the New Testament a serious review, and to take particular notice of all those passages that refer to God the father, the son, and the holy spirit. And if, upon such impartial examination as I shall be able to make, I find your facts truly represented, and your reasoning conclusive, I shall think it my duty to profess my conviction, though it should contradict the practice and sentiments of wise and learned men, whose authority, I own, has hitherto had too much influence on my mind.

Unitarian. My dear christian friend, your resolution is wise and good. Nothing is of greater

consequence, in the grand business of religion, than that every person, to whom God has given common sense and reason, should judge and determine for himself, in all points, wherein his duty is concerned. I have the particular satisfaction to reflect, that the more carefully you examine the subject of our debate, the stronger conviction you will receive of the truth of the scripture facts I have faithfully set forth. And, as to the reasoning part, it is certainly founded on the principles of common sense, which is the best method of interpreting scripture ; or for what end was our reason given to us ? or how can it be better employed than in exploring the revelation of God ?

With respect to the authority of wise and learned men, and the argument drawn from the established liturgy, I find, upon inquiry, that many wise, learned, and good men, and some whose judgment, upon any question, is of more value than that of thousands, have embraced the unitarian doctrine ; and, what deserves particular notice, some of them, who had been educated in the usual athanasian scheme, afterwards professed the right opinion of God, and his holy worship, in opposition to their worldly interest ; and even, since the reformation, suffered imprisonment, banishment, and death.

The memory of our first reformers ought, without doubt, to be held in very high esteem, upon account of what they did and suffered, in the glorious work of freeing religion from the foul corruptions of popery : but certain it is, that they did

not sufficiently examine the gross opinion of three persons in one God. They too readily took for granted, what had been settled and determined by the fathers and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries after the time of Christ ; when persons, acquainted with church history, assure us, the unity of God, in the plain and literal sense, was first corrupted ; and that a superstitious veneration of relics, and the invocation of saints, immediately followed the corruption.

To speak my mind freely, it is certainly matter of serious lamentation, that such a gross corruption in the pure religion of the holy Jesus, and which laid the foundation of the grand apostacy, has not been long ago banished from the church of England, which, in the most solemn manner, professeth the scripture as the only rule of faith and practice, and that nothing should be imposed on the consciences of men but what is warranted by the word of God. It is well known that this very subject was recommended to the consideration of the most eminent persons in church and state, about eighty years ago, by two very learned and very eminent divines, viz. Mr. Whiston, in his *Primitive Christianity Revived*, and Dr. Clarke, in his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. The latter I procured, and was there completely furnished with all the texts relating to the doctrine of the trinity, reduced under proper heads : and how any christian can withstand the evidence arising from such a number of texts (viz. *twelve hundred and fifty-one*) is to me astonishing. Again :

there was a particular application made to the governing powers in the justly famous *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, about forty years ago, in a humble, calm, and christian manner, in order to get the liturgy reformed, according to the standard of the scripture: but nothing has yet been attempted in that glorious cause. And, in the year 1772, application was made to parliament for relief from subscription to human articles of religious faith and doctrine: since which, several of the clergy of the established church have resigned their preferments and ministry therein, rather than continue to officiate, in the public service, against their consciences; while many, many more, remain behind, groaning and oppressed by their conformity, being yet unable wholly to withdraw themselves. Notwithstanding which, the same corrupt forms are still kept up in the midst of light and knowledge; and, therefore, common christians are, with the highest reason, called upon to examine, judge, determine, profess, and protest; to disregard all public authority, when it stands in competition with the express declarations of Christ and his apostles.

We are daily praying to our heavenly Father, that *his name may be hallowed*, that is, that he may be worshipped and adored, as the supreme and only object of the highest reverence and love of all rational creatures; and yet, at the same time, we obstinately continue in such false worship, as eclipses his supreme honour and glory, in express contradiction to his holy word. We are con-

stantly interceding with Almighty God, for the good estate of the catholic church, or, that the church of Christ may be universal ; that it may be so guided and governed by his good spirit, that all who profess and call themselves christians may be led into the way of truth ; and, at the same time, we seem determined to hold fast important errors regarding God and his holy worship, notwithstanding the strongest and clearest light. Upon some occasions, more especially in one of the collects for Good-Friday, we earnestly pray for the conversion of Jews, Turks, and infidels, and, at the end of the very same collect, we inconsistently keep up a religious practice, that is one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion. For it is extremely evident, by all accounts, that neither Jews nor Mahometans, who are believers of one supreme God, can be converted whilst they are taught to think, that the doctrine of three persons in one God, and the worship practised in consequence of it, are essential parts of the christian religion. This can be deemed little less than a solemn mockery of the Almighty, unless we employ our sincere endeavours to effect whatever we pray for ; and, I am afraid, will finally demonstrate the insincerity of this church and nation, if no alterations can be obtained from the governing powers.

Since my conviction, I have been naturally led to reflect on the lamentable state of mankind, in almost all ages and countries, with respect to the knowledge of the one true God. Not a great

many years after the flood, whereby the immediate power of the Almighty Creator was so remarkably displayed, there was a general revolt of the nations of the earth, into a state of gross idolatry: upon which account Almighty God chose a particular people for the glorious purpose of keeping up the knowledge and worship of himself; as this grand principle of all religion, though established by demonstrative evidence in the works of creation, would have been certainly lost, without an extraordinary revelation. And even this chosen people, the history of the Old Testament faithfully informs us, frequently fell into idolatry, before the Babylonish captivity, and very seldom continued any considerable time in a steady obedience to the Lord their God. And, happy had it been for the christian world, if they themselves had never departed from the plain and fundamental article of all true religion, viz. the unity of God, so frequently inculcated in the scripture. Moses, the Jewish lawgiver, delivers this important truth in the most solemn manner. *Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord.* (Deut. vi. 4.) And our Lord, when he was asked, by one of the scribes, *which was the first commandment of all?* confirms the same doctrine by his express authority: *Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord.* (Mark xii. 28 and 29.) And that this one God is the Father only, expressly distinguished from the son and holy spirit, is as plainly and strongly declared by Christ and his disciples, as it is possible

for words to set it forth. Yet, in opposition to the authority of both, who derived their commission from God, it was determined by fallible and presumptuous mortals, between four and five hundred years after Christ, that there are three supreme Gods, and, at the same time, that these three supreme Gods are one God; and whoever will not believe this gross nonsense, and impious contradiction, is doomed to eternal torments*. In consequence of this absurd doctrine it was decreed, that it is the duty of christians to worship God under the character of three co-equal persons, without even the least colour of evidence taken from scripture. If this be not such a departure from God and his holy worship as calls aloud for a reformation, I must despair of understanding the plainest case in matters of religion. But, whether the governing powers will regard their duty

* The creed of the athanasian christian is very accurately described by lord Bacon, one of the wisest and greatest men this country ever produced. (See his *Works*, 4to. vol. iii. p. 129). "He believes," says his lordship, "three to be one, and one to be three; a father not to be older than his son; a son to be equal with his father; and one proceeding from both to be equal to both; as believing three persons in one nature, and two natures in one person.

"He believes a virgin to be the mother of a son; and that very son of hers to be her maker. He believes *him* to have been shut up in a narrow cell, whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes *him* to have been born in time, who was and is from everlasting. He believes *him* to have been a weak child, and carried in arms, who is almighty; and *him* once to have died who alone has life and immortality."

in this grand affair, or whether they will not, every particular person who has gained right notions of God and his holy worship, is indispensibly obliged to profess and practise in exact conformity to the solemn determination of Christ and his apostles, without regarding any worldly inconveniences that may arise from the rejection of false notions and unscriptural worship. This is an essential character of Christ's disciples, and required, as an express condition, by our Lord himself. *Who-soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* (Luke ix. 26.)

But, let it be always remembered, and deeply fixed in our hearts, that right notions of God, and his holy worship, were not intended to amuse our minds with empty speculations; but to establish a rational correspondence between God and our own minds, that we may be effectually influenced to reduce to practice the pure and holy laws of Jesus Christ. If we have gained better and more rational sentiments of religion than we had before, we are called upon, by still stronger obligations, to *let our light so shine before men, that they may glorify our Father, who is in heaven.* Do we see, by a lively faith, the one supreme God in his real character, as a Being of all possible perfection, more especially justice, mercy, love, goodness, and every valuable excellence that can attract a reasonable affection? We are, then, certainly required to love this glorious and amiable Being

with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength; to prefer his favour before every interest of this mortal state, as being really better than life itself; to raise our minds above every corrupt appetite and passion; and to take all possible pains to adorn our lives and actions with the excellent qualifications of piety, righteousness, charity, sobriety, patience, purity, and holiness, which Christ and his apostles have solemnly inculcated as the necessary terms and conditions of gaining eternal life. On the other hand, very severe threatenings, namely, exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, and a state of great and lasting misery, are denounced against all wilful sinners, who continue such without sincere amendment and reformation, demonstrated by a uniform course of universal righteousness to the end of their lives.

Athanasian. My good friend, though you are very zealous in this important cause, yet your zeal is conducted by reason and knowledge. Party-zealots, in the midst of their solicitous concern to settle opinions and religious practices, are too apt to forget or disregard the christian obligations to universal charity and holiness of life. I am really convinced, that what you have said highly deserves the serious consideration of all those who profess themselves disciples of Jesus Christ, and in earnest believe the divine authority of the holy scriptures. I hope to make a proper use of this religious conference, and to act such a part, in consequence of it, as will be accepted at that solemn time, when

God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Unitarian. I sincerely rejoice, my dear christian friend, that you are become a Berean, an inquirer for yourself, and resolved to search the scripture with an unprejudiced mind; which excellent temper will, I make no doubt, lead you to a rational satisfaction upon this and other religious subjects. And may the blessings of the one Supreme God and Father of all attend your sincere disquisitions.

A Letter to the Rev. Mr. D——.

BY A LAYMAN.

REVEREND SIR,

AS, of late, I have not attended upon your ministry so constantly as heretofore, and as I have some ground to think that you judge me to be guilty of a fault in absenting myself, you will permit me to assign a reason in justification of my conduct.

You are very sensible, sir, that you and I differ very much in our religious opinions; so much, indeed, that I have heard you declare, that a person who thinks as I do, is, on that account, *excluded from salvation*. Such a declaration, however, affects me but little; knowing well that the great and good God hath never so declared; and,

therefore, esteeming the sentence of any frail and fallible man as a thing of little moment. Though, by the way, it seems no trifling affair, with respect to the person himself, who places himself in the seat of judgment, and pronounces condemnation on his brother for his opinions. This man had need look well to his authority. And how if, in the end, it should appear that the party so condemned, is one whom God *approves*? But to return. The wide difference in our sentiments, of necessity, prevents my gaining that profit from your ministry, which I would heartily wish to gain: and thus the principal design of public worship is defeated. How should I be *profited* by what I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear? by that which the reverence which I owe to the ever-blessed God, obliges me to regard with abhorrence? that at which I am really ashamed to be shocked *no more*; as, indeed, I should be, if I had such a sense of God upon my mind as I ought to have. Yet, although I think so ill of your tenets, considered in themselves, believing your *sincerity* unquestionable, I do, at the same time, account you a good and a worthy man. Such is every man, who, according to his best judgment, practises what is right and good.

The doctrines I object to are, that of the trinity according to Athanasius; the doctrine of original sin; the doctrine of election and reprobation; the doctrine of the satisfaction, and that of imputed righteousness.

The doctrine of the trinity, as Athanasius and you represent it, appears to me utterly *absurd* and *contradictory*: because you represent the Father, the son, and the spirit, as three separate *agents*, each of them *God*, each of them *infinite*: and yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. You will not, surely, say the Father, son, and spirit are *not* three separate *agents*; when, at the same time, you assert, that the father *sent* the son into the world, who, in consequence of being so sent, *came* into the world, and *did* and *suffered* what is recorded of him: when, at the same time, you assert also, that the Father *sent* the spirit *in the name of the son*, and that the spirit, in consequence of being so sent, *came* into the world, and *convinced* mankind of sin, &c. Surely, sir, you will not say that the *sender* and the *sent*, he who *commands* and he who *obeys*, are *not* separate agents, but the *same*. Here, then, are three *agents*, each of whom you affirm to be infinite, each of whom you affirm to be God, and to each of whom, as to the Lord your God, you pay divine worship. Yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. And you say well: but you miserably *contradict* yourself; and, however good your intention may be, you greatly *dishonour* the eternal Deity, who is *one infinite agent*.

Whenever you declare the son and spirit to be *equal* with the Father, you do, in the very terms, acknowledge that their *existence* is *separate* from the Father's *existence*. You always conceive of things as *existing separately*, when you think of

their *equality*: you cannot help it if you would. But you may *impose* upon yourself.

The doctrine of original sin, according to you, sir, seems to consist of two parts: in the first place, *guilt* derived from Adam's transgression upon all his posterity, whereby they are brought under the wrath and curse of God, and are made liable to the torments of hell for ever: and, secondly, *the total corruption of their nature*; which is such, that it renders them *sinners by nature*, and *dead* in trespasses and sins; so dead, that they are no more able to do any thing *truly good*, than a dead *corpse* is able to *rise and walk*.

With respect to the first of these articles, I would observe, that if we know any thing whatsoever, we know that it is *not just* to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*. If it be asked, "How do you know this?" in return, I ask, how do you know that there is any thing *wrong*, or *inconsistent with justice*, in oppressions, murders, massacres, perjuries, blasphemies? Suppose any one should affirm that these things are very *innocent*. If you thought he deserved any notice, I doubt not you would eagerly contradict him. Yet you could not do it without showing your inconsistency: for that same reason which declares these things to be *essentially unjust*, is equally clear, full, and positive in declaring the *injustice* of punishing *one* man for the sin of *another*. If this be *right*, there is not the shadow of a reason for thinking those horrid crimes to be *really criminal*. But we *know, assuredly*, that oppressions, murders,

massacres, perjuries, blasphemies, are really and essentially *criminal*: and, in the same manner, and with equal certainty, we know that to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*, neither *is*, nor *can* be just. And, therefore, most sincerely do I *abhor* the doctrine which ascribes such a conduct to that righteous Being, whom I would always venerate and adore.

I have heard you say, sir, you do not believe that infants are sent into hell. But if they are *punishable* for the sin of their first father, and if they are *actually punished* in some degree, why should they not receive *the full punishment* which is due to them? And why was it, when we were talking of this matter, that you seemed *unwilling* to be thought a believer in the damnation of infants? I apprehend you were shocked [for you *started*] at the impious tenet. It was well. The great God intended you should be shocked; and not at this tenet only, but also at several others which you believe and promulge. Indeed, he doth permit it to be otherwise. He endowed us with *liberty* (*i. e.* freedom of will) that we might be *accountable*. I would just take notice, here, that if we have *no* liberty, if nothing but actual sin can proceed from our nature, as nothing but an impure stream can proceed from an impure fountain; then are actual sinners, as you term them, and infants, upon the very same footing in respect of guilt; for these last were just as able to *prevent* the sin of their *first Father*, as the others were to *prevent* what you term *their own* actual sins. I cannot

give them that name ; because as actual sin cannot subsist without *agency*, so neither without *liberty* can agency possibly subsist.

With respect to the second article in this doctrine, viz. the entire *corruption* of the human nature, whereby men are rendered *sinner*s by nature, and utterly *incapacitated* to do any thing which is *truly good*, I would observe, that, if we consider what sin *is*, it will be found a contradiction to say a man is a *sinner* by nature. You may as well say that it is sinful for a man to have two *hands*, or two *feet*, as to say it is sinful for him to have human *passions*, or any thing else which belongs to him as a man. But then may sin be charged upon him, when he has knowingly and wilfully done the evil which he might have avoided, or *omitted* to do the good which he might have done. Till you can affirm either one or the other of him, you have no authority to call him a sinner. And when, through his negligence or bad conduct, he has *corrupted* himself, and *acquired evil habits*, you may say he is a sinful and a wicked creature then, and not before. If this be the true account of sin and sinfulness, a *sinful nature*, as such, is plainly a contradiction. And can you, sir, prove that it is *not* the true account ? If you can, I really think there is nothing too hard for you.

The doctrine of election and reprobation asserts that, while a small part of mankind was, from eternity, *predestinated* to enjoy everlasting happiness in the heavenly world, the greater part by far was

also *predestinated*, by the same gracious God, to suffer everlasting torments in hell fire.

That any man, whose understanding is not entirely *ruined*, should believe this doctrine, would be to me a matter of the greatest astonishment, if I were not yet more astonished to think, that it is believed by some who do really venerate their Maker. If it doth not carry its own refutation along with it, it must be owned there is little hope of its being refuted. However, I would observe two things in relation to it. First, that if any one were about to utter the most horrid blasphemy against the ever-blessed God, he would be put to it to invent any thing worse, *in kind*, than what is contained in this doctrine. Should he take the hint from it to affirm, that God *predestinated* all the creatures which he *hath* made, or in future *will* make, to suffer *everlasting torments*, this would be only a greater *degree* of the same *kind* of blasphemy. In the next place, I would take notice, that, when you say, “although the great God hath, “prior to their existence, *predestinated* and *decreed* “the greatest part of mankind to suffer everlasting torments in hell, he is, nevertheless, infinitely *good* and *gracious*.” I have good reason to think, that your heart *recoils*, and flatly *denies* what you utter with your tongue, though you *strive hard* to believe it. I ask you, seriously, sir, is not such the fact? And do not you impute it to the *natural wickedness* of your heart? I have no desire that you should answer me: but you will not do amiss, perhaps, in delivering your answer

to him who *made you*, and made you *what you are*; that you might naturally *shudder* at this horrid tenet, as you naturally *shudder* at the most atrocious and shocking crimes.

The doctrine of the satisfaction is this: that Christ died *in the room and stead* of sinners, suffering a punishment equivalent to what was due to them, and thereby satisfied the law and justice of God. Now what do we understand by these words, punishment, law, justice? *Pain* and *punishment* seem to be very different things. The brute animals *suffer*, but are *not* punished: for then, only, is a being punished, when he *suffers for sin charged upon him*. Law, in the present case, I take to be an *authoritative edict*, prescribing to, and enjoining upon, *its own subjects* right conduct, and denouncing a penalty against disobedience. Justice is the same as righteousness; it is eternal and immutable. Whatever is just and right, is such in its own nature, it was always such, and such it must remain for ever. Likewise, whatever is unjust and wrong is so in itself, eternally and immutably. The great God, who is omniscient, knows *all* that is right or wrong; and he, of his abundant goodness, hath made us capable of the same knowledge, *as far as is needful and proper for us*. He hath made us thus capable, in that he hath made us reasonable beings. As such, we understand and know, that to practise obedience to our Maker's will is *right*. We understand and know, it is *right* for a child, who has it in his power, to relieve and support an aged

parent in distress. And if a person returned evil for good, we understand and know this to be *wrong*. And whatever it be which reason pronounces, with the same clearness, to be either just or unjust, *such it is*. Every man must grant this, unless he will grant he has *no reason* to think that to be just or unjust, which yet he *does* think to be so: I mean every man who allows the *existence* of justice and injustice. There was always a righteousness proper for every rational being existing, or designed to exist. This the ever-blessed Deity saw, and contemplated from everlasting. This is what I understand by eternal and immutable justice. It is founded on the *circumstances* and *relations* of beings. To instance among ourselves of the human race: should a man be either a father or a son, his being so related as he is, makes it just and right for him to do what does not belong to a person who is without children, or who has lost his parents. So riches, knowledge, wit, and power, make a certain conduct to be just and right for their several possessors, which *cannot* be right for persons *differently circumstanced*.

We have now, I believe, got the true meaning of the terms in question. But if law be such as hath been said, how shall its demands be satisfied? It is exceeding plain, that they never can otherwise than by *a compliance* with what is demanded. The law requires of its *own subjects* this alternative, “*obey, or suffer the penalty*.” Now, in either case, there is *compliance*, and, consequently, *satisfaction*. But, if they neither *obey* nor *suffer*

the penalty, there is *no* compliance, and, consequently, *no satisfaction*. It signifies nothing to say, that some person obeyed *in their stead*, or suffered *in their stead*. Neither the obedience nor the suffering of this person is what the law demands: each is *something else*: it is *no* compliance, and therefore *cannot* be satisfaction. If you were to require *one* thing of me, and I were to give you *another*, it could never be said that I had *satisfied your demand*. You, indeed, may be satisfied with something different from what you required; *you* may be changed: but, if the *law* be changed, it will not be the law which we are considering. Indeed, it was never supposed to be changed. It should be remembered, however, that nothing can be more extravagant than to affirm any law to be *satisfied*, while its demands remain *unsatisfied*: and that these can only be satisfied by *a compliance* with what is demanded; and that, as the obedience and sufferings of Christ are *no such* compliance with what the law of God demands (which is the obedience or suffering of *its own subjects*), therefore Christ *hath not* satisfied the law of God, in the room and stead of sinners.

And that justice cannot be satisfied by the vicarious punishment of an innocent person, is sufficiently evident from this one consideration: that justice absolutely *forbids* to punish the innocent. This you acknowledge, when you say (in regard to sickness and pain) that infants would not be *punished*, if they were not *guilty*. However, you say, that as Christ *consented* to endure punishment,

that *consent* rendered him in *justice punishable*. Did it then *take away* his innocence? Did it render him properly *criminal*? If not, how then could it make him *punishable*? Will you affirm that it is in the *nature* of such consent so to do? and that *any* one who *consents* to be punished is *punishable in justice*? Sure you will not. But if you do, I must contradict you, and declare, that a being is *not* punishable on account of his *consent*, but only on account of his *crime*. It is really wonderful, that people should imagine justice might be *satisfied* by what is a *violation* of justice.

With respect to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, viz. that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, so as to become *their* righteousness, I would observe, that to impute or reckon to me what is not mine, is *wrong* imputation, or *wrong* reckoning; it is declaring a thing *to be* what it *is not*. Moreover, it is impossible to make that right conduct, *which I never performed*, to become *truly mine*, merely by *declaring* it so to be. Suppose a person in great affliction be by some other person relieved, and made easy and happy; and suppose it should be generally reported that you relieved this distressed person, when you are conscious that you have *not* done it: it is then imputed and reckoned to you; but it is a *wrong* imputation; and it is plainly and utterly impossible that this *deed* should become *your deed*. Let who will *declare* it so to be, the matter is not altered hereby, and such declaration must inevitably be *untrue*. There are some who

understand this doctrine somewhat differently from what I have defined it to be ; but you, sir, I think, do not. Indeed I take yours to be the true and proper idea of the doctrine : for if a person *only derive benefit* from Christ's righteousness, there is *no* imputation in the case*.

I really shudder to reflect on the counterpart of this doctrine : the imputation of the sins of men to the blessed son of God. But if you be a consistent believer in imputed righteousness, you *must* believe in such imputation of sins. Indeed, I hope you are not consistent ; for, if you be, you can have no objection to that horrid assertion, which I dare say you are not unacquainted with, viz. that the great God turned away his face from his expiring son as from *an abominable object*. This tenet is by no means compatible with the idea of the *innocent* enduring punishment instead of the *guilty* ; but I am not surprised at the inconsistency.

Yet all these doctrines, you think, are warranted by the word of God. And do you really think, sir, that the sacred word can warrant such doctrines as these ? I think myself well authorized to declare them absurd, impossible, impious, and therefore *false*. If you deny the charge, you should prove the contrary : which if you do, you will perform great and eminent service for the cause in which you are embarked. Till this is effected,

* You believe (if I do not misunderstand you) that if a man be *approved* of God, it is not on account of *his own righteousness*, but on account of *the righteousness of Christ*, with which the man is *adorned*, as with a glorious robe.

either by you or somebody else, I must think it is not doing the word of God much real honour to say, as you do, that these doctrines are not only warranted by it, but are the principal and most excellent doctrines which it delivers to us. I sincerely bless God that he hath taught me to put a much better and a more natural interpretation upon his word, which has been lamentably obscured by the glosses of both ill-meaning and well-meaning persons. And, as I esteem the revelation which God has given us in the scriptures to be an invaluable treasure, I am very sorry to see it so sadly perverted, as to be made to countenance opinions which are a reproach to religion. Such opinions (pardon me, sir) I must hear, and little else, if I attend upon your ministry. I must hear the most unworthy and degrading representations of the glorious Deity, and, what is still worse, I must hear injustice and cruelty charged indirectly upon him who is perfectly just and infinitely benevolent. I must hear another represented as *equal* to him who is declared to be “the ONLY true God;” and who himself hath, in his own person, said, “I am God, and there is none else.” I must hear prayers (in which I would not join for the whole world), wherein penitent confession is made to him who created and formed us of a *sinful nature*, and a *heart naturally full of wickedness*: I must hear this confession, instead of a devout thanksgiving for those intelligent and moral faculties, whereby we are made capable of religious and heavenly felicity. And I must hear praise

and thanks ascribed to the ever-blessed God, for satisfying justice by that which his soul must utterly abhor, by the *punishment* of his holy, and innocent, and beloved son, &c. &c. Sir, I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear these things.

I have a little more to add, and I have done. I cannot help observing a very remarkable difference between your preaching and that of many whose principles are a good deal similar to your own. These persons judging, that although men are naturally corrupt, they are *moral* agents still; and judging, moreover, that the gospel hath revealed nothing more plainly than this truth, “ that “ the present state is a state of *trial* and *discipline*, “ having respect to another state, where we are to “ be dealt with according to our behaviour in “ this,” they do generally explain and enforce those *duties* which are required of us, insisting on the various arguments and motives drawn from the nature of things, as well as those peculiar to the gospel. Now, it is true, sir, I have heard you acknowledge, that the present state is a state of trial; but your preaching totally *excludes* this truth: for you deny the moral agency of mankind; affirming, that men are no more able to do any thing *truly good*, than a dead *corpse* is able to arise and walk; and one great part of your business is to describe the *misery* and *sinfulness* of this which you call our *natural state*. Instead of counselling your hearers (as was the apostle Paul’s manner) to “ labour that they may be accepted of “ God: because we must all appear before the

“ judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad,” you tell them that, if they have the smallest portion of *true grace* (which you aver to be sovereign, *i. e.* arbitrary), they shall certainly be saved; but, if they are never so happy as to be made partakers of this *grace* (which, being sovereign, doth not at all depend upon any thing they can do), they must inevitably be lost: that is, those who are lost are lost *for want of grace*, and not because they *did* the evil which they *might have avoided*, and *omitted* to do the good which they *might have done**. You tell them, further, that they must never expect to *recommend* themselves to God by any thing they can perform: a piece of doctrine which doth not seem to correspond very well, either with the passage just quoted, or with the exhortation of the same apostle, addressed to the Thessalonians, as follows: “ We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to *please* God, so ye would abound more and more.” And yet it must be owned, that you express great disapprobation of the conduct of such as think to be accepted of God *without* the practice of what is good. I look upon this as a very *happy* inconsistency, resulting from the principles of that nature,

* You may possibly say, with some, that wicked men can abstain from evil, and do good, if they *will*; while yet you affirm they *cannot* will. But surely a man cannot *do* what he cannot *will* to do. To tell him he can is to insult him.

which (however you may depreciate and vilify it) is *the excellent workmanship* of God, his rich and invaluable *gift*.

A manner of preaching so very opposite to this leading doctrine of the gospel, that we shall be dealt with according to our behaviour in the present state of *trial* and *discipline*, appears to me so contrary to the intention of preaching, that it is not likely I should receive much benefit from it : especially it is not likely, as I consider it liable to the preceding objections.

And now, sir, I have given you my reasons for non-attendance upon your ministry. It is not because I have a *dislike* to public worship ; so far from it, I cannot help thinking it a misfortune to be thus debarred from what I esteem a great and desirable privilege. I should rejoice to join with my fellow-christians in such worship as I think agreeable to the true spirit of christianity : but were I to join with *you*, I should, *in many instances*, wrong my conscience ; and, in barely giving attendance, I cannot avoid being *hurt*, more or less, by what I hear. When I do attend, I endeavour to make the most of what I approve, join in the worship where I *can*, and pay a particular regard to your sincerity and upright meaning. If it should be asked, why I attended constantly so long ; I did it because I was afraid of setting a bad example, or rather what might be so construed. But, on further consideration, there seems no great reason to fear this, as it is well known that I do not make the day a day of *pleasure* : and I hope,

and am persuaded, that my absence is not suspected to proceed from a *disregard to religion*.

In this letter, sir, I have not scrupled to declare my sentiments of your opinions with a great deal of *frankness*: you may possibly think, *too much*; but the case required it. And I doubt not you would have been as free with my principles, if you had written to me on the subject. I had in view the honour of God, and the christian religion, as well as the justification of my own conduct. I assure you, that I neither intended, nor do intend, any thing like hostility; for, however much I may think you *mistaken*, as a man I esteem and respect you; and have not designedly failed to *show* my respect upon proper occasions, when you were either present or absent. I now beg leave to offer you my best wishes, and subscribe myself, &c.



AN ADDRESS

TO THE

Members of the Church of England,

AND TO

PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS

IN GENERAL.

BRETHREN,

PERMIT me to address you on a subject of the greatest importance to a sincere believer in Christ. I observe that many of you, every seventh day, frequent some place set apart for religious worship. You there profess to offer up

prayers to the Being who created the world. Whatever may be the laws or customs of your different places of worship, you presume that they are founded on the holy scriptures. Any thing contrary to those scriptures ought not, you think, to be admitted into your worship.

Are you then worshippers of God, or not? It is a serious question. Let me persuade you to give it a moment's consideration. The words which Christ used, in answer to a Jewish inquirer after the first commandment of the law, may assist you in your thoughts. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*." I bring you to this test: do you really worship that God, of whom Christ speaks, or do you not?

Before I examine this point, let me observe to you what I have seen, or heard, in your places of worship. In the episcopal churches, a form of prayer is used, in which are the following words: O God the son, redeemer of the world;—O God the holy ghost;—O holy, blessed, and glorious trinity, three persons and one god, have mercy upon us miserable sinners;—O lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us: and, in many similar passages, prayers are addressed to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, and to the trinity. In most also of the places of worship belonging to the dissenters, prayers are offered up to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, and to the trinity.

* Mark, xii. 29.

Now, brethren, if Jesus Christ be not God, if the holy ghost be not God, if the trinity be not God, you are guilty of a breach of Christ's commandments in praying to them ; and if you pray to all these, you err grievously, for Jesus Christ tells us, that " the Lord our God is one Lord ;" to which great truth Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, bear witness.

Of whom then did Christ speak ? The words are taken from Deut. 6th chap. 4th ver. ; and, literally translated, are, " Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." Jehovah is the name by which God made himself known to Moses ; Jehovah created the heavens and the earth ; Jehovah called Abraham ; spake to Moses ; revealed himself to the prophets ; was worshipped by the Jewish nation. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament, Jehovah declares himself to be one, and that there is no other God beside him : the children of Israel, while they obeyed him, worshipped him as the one and only true God ; and when they mixed with the worship of Jehovah that of idols, they were brought to their senses by severe punishments. When Christ preached to the Jews, Jehovah was the object of their worship ; of him also Christ bears witness, namely, that Jehovah is the only true God ; that there is no one good but him* ; that he is his God and Father† ; that Jehovah his Father is greater than he‡.

These few passages of scripture are, I should

* Matt. xix. 17.

† Matt. xi. 25. John xx. 17.

‡ John xiv. 28.

think, sufficient to convince an unprejudiced mind, that it must be improper to offer up prayers to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, or to the trinity : but let us consider each of them separately.

First. Of *Jesus Christ*. Jesus Christ, says an apostle to the Jews, “ was a man approved of God
“ among you by miracles, and wonders, and
“ signs, which God did by him, in the midst of
“ you, as ye yourselves also know : him, being
“ delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-
“ knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wick-
“ ed hands have crucified and slain : whom God
“ hath raised up, having loosed the pains of
“ death||.” Again, “ this Jesus hath God raised
“ up, whereof we all are witnesses§ ; and, there-
“ fore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly,
“ that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye
“ have crucified, both lord and Christ.¶” There is a clear distinction between God and Christ: Christ performed wonders, but it was by the power of God ; by God’s permission, he was delivered into the hands of the Jews and slain ; it was God that raised up Christ from the dead ; it was God that made him lord and Christ.

How then say ye, in express contradiction to scripture and to common sense, that Jesus Christ is God?

Consult common sense. Could God lie in the womb of a woman? Could God expire on the cross? Could God be buried in the grave?

|| Acts ii. 22—24.

§ Acts ii. 32.

¶ Acts ii. 36.

Shocking suppositions ! Brethren, examine for yourselves. Let no man deceive you by a specious humility, to give worship to any, but the one true God, for “ thou shalt worship him alone*.”

Secondly. Of the *holy ghost*. Our forefathers supposed, and, at the present day, ignorant people in many countries suppose, that a man consists of two different substances ; one which we can see and feel ; the other a substance not to be felt. When a man died, they supposed that these two substances were separated one from the other. The body was conveyed to the ground ; and the ghost, for so they called the other substance, hovered about the place. Hence a number of idle tales are told about ghosts in church-yards ; and it was said of a man dying, that he gave up the ghost. The Greek word in the scriptures, which means “ spirit,” or “ wind,” or “ breath,” is frequently translated by this word “ ghost.” But wherever it is so translated, it is applied to God in the same manner as the spirit of a man is to a man. When you say, such a man’s spirit is gentle or untameable, you do not mean that the man and his spirit are different persons. Neither ought you, when speaking of God, to say that God and his spirit are different persons. Your addresses to the holy ghost have no foundation in scripture, and they are strictly prohibited by the first commandment, “ thou shalt have none other gods but me.”

Thirdly. Of the *trinity*. Trinity is a Latin

* Matt. iv. 10.

word, not to be found in the scriptures. The notion, annexed to it in your creed, of three persons, each of whom is God, making but one God, is rank nonsense. And will you, my brethren, enter into the presence of God, pretend to worship him, and yet give him a name, the invention of idle and wicked disputers? Reflect—there is but one God, and his name is one, and his glory will he not give to another.

Perhaps you will reply to me, that I have selected those passages only, which favour my opinion, and have neglected others, which prove Jesus Christ to be God. It is sufficient for me to observe, that the scripture cannot contradict itself. The passages by which you have been deluded to believe Christ to be God, will be found, on examination, to convey no such meaning. Search the scriptures. Point out one single passage, in which Jesus Christ declared himself to be God. Point out one, in which the apostles declared him to be God. In a matter of such importance, it is not proper for you to infer from this or that passage, ill explained, that he is God; but as he expressly declares himself to be inferior to God, believe his words; and, as he commands, worship the Father, in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps you think it sufficient to follow, without inquiry, the religion of your fathers. Had your fathers in succession done the same, what would now be the religion of this country? Three centuries ago they were immersed in ignorance and popery; some centuries farther back, they were

gross idolaters. On this principle, Jesus Christ and his apostles would have had no hearers. Be not deceived, brethren ; religion is a personal concern, the bible is open before you, from thence you are to form your opinions, not from the notions of your fathers, or the customs of the times.

Perhaps you will say, you are ignorant, and these things are mysteries. Remember that mystery means something hidden ; revelation means the discovery of that which was hidden and unknown*. There are no mysteries in the religion of Jesus Christ : his gospel is plain, simple, and clear. Even the “ mystery of iniquity,” which began to work in the apostles’ time, and now works, and keeps in bondage the nations of Europe, is sufficiently known to every inquiring mind.

Brethren, I call you from false objects of worship, to the worship of the living God. If any one, who reads this address, believes with me, that there is one God only, the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, I call on him to forsake the temples, where they have set up other objects of worship. To the rest, I say, with the apostle, examine yourselves, prove your own selves, whether you be in the faith ; and if your inquiry leads you to this great truth, that the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ is the only true God, I say to you with the scriptures,

Worship him alone.

W. F.

* Mark iv. 22. Col. 1. 26.

AN ESSAY
ON
THE NATURE AND DISCIPLINE
OF A
Christian Church.

BY R. WRIGHT,
OF WISBEACH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty ; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

PAUL.

INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIANS continue divided not only on points of doctrine, but also in matters of church discipline. A perfect agreement is not to be expected, but it is presumed more union may be effected, not by the sacrifice of liberty, but by the extension of charity. The lordly spirit of former ages still retains a degree of influence in many churches ; nor is it easy to bring christians to the simplicity of the gospel. The nature of a christian church has been much mistaken ; the principles of christian liberty not sufficiently considered, and still less regarded in practice than in theory ; it has been taken for granted that a precise form of church government and discipline, to be maintained in all ages, was instituted by Jesus and his apostles. From these

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mistakes many evils have arisen ; the disciples of Christ have been disunited, the peace of the church destroyed, the progress of the gospel retarded, christians of different parties have insisted on their own regulations as laws of Christ. It is designed, in this essay, to attempt the removal of these evils, at the same time, to promote order in christian societies, and to prevent disunion on account of matters which Jesus and his apostles left undecided.

CHAP. I.

On the Nature of the Christian Church.

After all the volumes which have been written on this subject, when the simplicity of the gospel is considered, it may be presumed that the whole matter lies in narrow compass. As it is a true maxim that the government and regulations adopted in any organized society should be suited to the nature of the society, it seems proper to take a concise view of the nature of a christian church, before we treat of its discipline.

§ 1. *Of the word church.*

Much confusion has arisen from the misconstruction and misapplication of terms in religion ; therefore it will be proper to examine the meaning of the word church, as it is used in the New Testament. As the word is now commonly used, it

is very indefinite. It may mean a building formed of inanimate materials, or a religious hierarchy, or any national establishment of religion, or even the clergy of such an establishment, or a select number of persons in distinction from the christian assembly with whom they worship God ; but it means something very different from all these as used by the evangelists and apostles.

The Greek word translated church in the New Testament, means an assembly, and such the context determines to be its uniform meaning. The word by itself expresses not the character of the assembly spoken of ; that must be learned from the connection in which it is used. It is applicable to an assembly of any kind. It is applied to an assembly either lawfully convened, or come together in a tumultuous manner : see Acts xix. 32, 39, 41, where it is translated assembly. It is applied to any assembly, or congregation of christians, as may be seen by examining the New Testament at large. A christian church is an assembly of persons professing the faith of Christ. In the New Testament, no distinction is made between the church and assembly, or congregation, at large, who unite in christian worship ; they are identical. The modern distinction of church and congregation is unauthorized by scripture, has no precedent in the apostolic writings, and involves a solecism.

§ 2. *What it is that constitutes a man a christian.*

As a christian church is an assembly of christians, and no christian ought to be denied the privileges of the church, it is proper to define what it is that constitutes a man a christian. The New Testament settles this point, by teaching that all who believe that Jesus is the Christ, *i. e.* the Messiah, are christians : *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God* : 1 John, v. 1 ; *i. e.* he is a christian entitled to all the privileges of the gospel dispensation. It is expected that this belief should be more than a blind assent, and that its reality should be shown by its effects. All who profess to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and do not practically deny it, by immoral conduct, ought to be received by us as fellow-christians, and admitted to all the privileges of our churches.

§ 3. *The formation of a christian church.*

A christian church is not instituted by worldly power, civil authority, or the laws of the state ; it stands on a ground clearly distinct from civil government and institutions : Christ said, *my kingdom is not of this world*. It is a self-formed society, consisting of persons who come together voluntarily, and unite by free choice. The ground of union is the belief that Jesus is the Christ, or the general belief of the gospel. *Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ* : 1 Cor. iii. xi. The bond of union in such a society is not a particular creed, or articles

of faith, arranged by fallible men, but love ; in the temper of their great Master they are to unite and walk together. *Keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace :* Eph. iv. 3. *Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness :* Col. iii. 14. The ends for which christians unite in churches are, 1. Their mutual edification ; that they may promote each other's knowledge and christian virtue, and be helpers of each other's joy. 2. The glory of God, in the promotion of the gospel, and the cause of truth and righteousness. 3. The good of their fellow-creatures ; that, by holding forth the word of life, they may shine as lights in the world. Any number of christians may unite on the principle before stated, in the spirit pointed out, to pursue the great ends mentioned, and by so uniting they become a christian church.

CHAP. II.

On Christian Liberty.

Unless the principles of christian liberty be understood and acted upon, it is not likely that churches will be formed according to gospel purity and simplicity. If these principles be not constantly regarded, the peace of churches will not be long preserved, nor the true ends of christian union attained. Discipline will degenerate into domination, and order give place to confusion.

Hence it is thought proper to bring those principles into view in this essay.

§ 1. *Christ the only master of christians in matters of faith and religious practice.*

One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren : Matt. xxiii. 8. All who attempt to exercise dominion or controul, over the faith or religious practice of others, not only violate their right, they also invade the prerogatives which God hath given to Christ, in constituting him the only Lord of christians, and assume authority which belongs exclusively to him. To submit to any authority but that of Christ, in religious matters, is an act of disobedience to him. Christ hath not delegated to any church authority, or controul, over the faith and religious practice of others, not even of its own members : and if he hath not given such authority, no church can have a just claim to it ; had he invested any persons with such authority, they would so far have been constituted masters ; but this is contrary to his express words.

§ 2. *Churches formed according to the New Testament cannot exist but on the principles of liberty.*

Self-formed societies must be founded on the principles of liberty, because formed by the free choice of those who compose them. They were free to judge, speak, and act for themselves in all religious matters, before they united in churches,

and such a union cannot be supposed to imply an abandonment of christian liberty, and the rights of conscience, seeing it is founded on those principles. However unequal in abilities and worldly circumstances, christians unite in societies as equals in religious rights and privileges. Unless every christian has a right to exercise full liberty in all religious matters, dissenting churches cannot justify their dissent ; for a church can have no rights but what belong to every christian. To be consistent, they must constitute their churches, and conduct all their proceedings, on the principles of liberty. Whenever they attempt to restrict the liberty of each other, they violate the leading principles of dissent.

§ 3. *Christians are all equal as to religious rights and liberties.*

Christ hath placed his followers on a perfect level, as children of the same father, and servants of the same master, and taught them to treat each other as brethren. One member of a christian church cannot have more authority than another, to prescribe what shall be believed or practised in religion, unless he can prove himself something more than a brother and fellow-servant. Either the members of christian societies have a right to judge, speak, and act freely, in all religious matters, or it will be impossible to prove they have a right to use that liberty in any matter of religion. Either this liberty belongs to every christian, whether a member or not a member of a church,

or it cannot be proved to belong to any christian ; for christians are all brethren. There is no way to distinction in the church of God, but by superior virtue and usefulness. *He that will be greatest among you let him become servant of all.*

CHAP. III.

On the Discipline of a Christian Church.

In every assembly, or society, order must be maintained, and some regular plan pursued, or much good cannot be expected. In a society where the mutual improvement of its members is one end of their union, some kind of discipline will be found necessary. On the subject of church discipline christians have gone to great extremes. In many societies such arbitrary and rigorous discipline has been practised, as has rendered the churches of God houses of bondage. To avoid this extreme, in some congregations all discipline has been laid aside. The medium is to be sought, and it seems to lie in adopting what is consistent with liberty and will be edifying.

§ 1. *What is meant by discipline.*

Discipline does not imply dominion ; for no church has a right to exercise dominion over its members. The object of discipline is edification. Edification cannot be promoted by coercion, and all coercion is incompatible with christian liberty.

Christian discipline has nothing in it of authoritative proceedings, for Christ has not delegated his authority to his followers. As it relates to individuals, it consists in giving them suitable instruction, admonition, and reproof. As it relates to the church, in the preservation of order and regularity, and in the conducting their affairs with that decorum and propriety which may best promote the ends of christian society. Erroneous opinions are not a proper subject of discipline, only so far as the word is used merely to express instruction. Improper conduct alone calls for admonition, and sin for reproof and censure. To attempt to dictate to others how they shall understand and practise the positive commands of Christ, and make our judgment a rule of action to them, is no legitimate part of church discipline ; because it is an assumption of dominion over conscience, which Christ hath prohibited. That is antichristian tyranny, not christian discipline, which consists in imposing on others what is contrary to their judgment and consciences.

§ 2. No regular plan of church discipline instituted by Jesus and his apostles.

Jesus Christ, in revealing the gospel, directed his disciples to the adoption of no particular form of church government. He taught the great doctrines and duties of christianity, revealed the hope of immortality, left the most perfect example, commissioned his apostles to go on with the important work, and left the world without prescrib-

ing any particular plan of discipline to be maintained in the church. It is incumbent on those who deny this to prove the contrary from the New Testament, not on me to prove a negative.

The apostles, like their master, left matters of discipline undecided. They only gave general rules to preserve the churches from the defilement of immorality, for the recovery and restoration of transgressors, for the comfort and edification of the brethren, and for the general promotion of the gospel. Any particular advice they gave related to particular cases as they occurred. In vain may we search in their writings for any precise and regular plan of church discipline.

It follows, that christian societies are left to choose those plans of discipline which appear to them most consistent with the doctrines and precepts of Christ, with the spirit which he inculcated and manifested, with christian liberty, and with the great ends for which the gospel was sent into the world, according to the times and circumstances in which they live. But they should not be too tenacious of their own plans. The servants should be careful not to lay too much stress on what the master left undecided; nor attempt to prescribe, with a tone of authority, regulations on which he was silent, which he left to the wisdom and prudence of his followers. Every christian may recommend what he thinks best; but it would be wrong for any one to break the peace of a society, or take the least offence, because what he recommends is not adopted. Every church

has a right to adopt that plan of discipline which it thinks most consonant with the spirit of christianity, and most calculated for edification; but no church ought to be offended with other churches for not adopting the same plan. Churches will vary in their plans of discipline, and they have a right to do so, as the members of each church have an undoubted right to judge for themselves; nor ought this to produce the least disunion among the churches.

The best system of discipline is that which best accords with the purity and simplicity of the gospel, which is most consistent with christian liberty, and is best suited to the particular circumstances of the church which adopts it. The same plan of discipline does not seem equally suited to all churches, nor to all times and circumstances. A diversity may be found necessary and most useful, according to the varied circumstances of different societies; and the whole business rests with the members of each society to determine on for themselves. Only it ought ever to be remembered, that no church has a right to vote its own plans and regulations laws of Christ, to make them terms of communion, or to attempt to impose them on others who may not approve or adopt them; and that the more simple and liberal any plan is, the more agreeable it is to the spirit of christianity.

It is highly probable that many regulations in the first christian churches were adopted from the synagogue; be this as it may, it is evident they

began without any regular plan of discipline. At first the apostles managed every thing, at length prudence suggested the appointment of deacons, or stewards to manage the temporal affairs of the church. The appointment of elders was after the plan of the synagogue. Each society had the choice of its own officers, and the management of its own affairs : and the churches kept up a friendly connection and intercourse with each other, for mutual edification, and the promotion of the gospel. Every thing appears before us in the New Testament with great simplicity. Wherever a few persons believed the gospel, they assembled together and were called a church. Some person, or persons, were chosen to preside in their assemblies, for the preservation of order ; such were called elders. Those who were qualified were appointed to be teachers and pastors, to watch over their brethren, and feed them with the word of life. Such regulations were adopted as were thought most edifying. The apostles gave them such advice as their particular circumstances required. Such were the primitive churches.

§ 3. *On the officers in a christian church.*

In every society some must be appointed to take the lead, and act for the good of the whole. Every christian church has felt the necessity of having officers ; the only question here is what kind of officers is most consistent with the liberty and simplicity of the gospel. A hierarchy, governed by prelates and dignitaries, is incompatible with

primitive christianity, as such officers are invested with dignity and authority that Christ hath prohibited in his church. The strict presbyterian form of church government, as it invests a few men with authority over their brethren, seems irreconcilable with christian liberty. The bishops of the primitive church were simply overseers of the flock of God, the presbyters simply elders: and they assumed no dominion over others. The officers in a christian church are no more than brethren, appointed by their brethren to officiate among them, for the promotion of the cause of truth and righteousness. Every church has a right to choose its own officers, and to determine what officers it will have. It will be for the advantage of every church, where it is practicable, to have a minister who can devote himself entirely to the work of the ministry, and such studies and labours as are connected with it. Where this is not practicable, there can be no impropriety in their calling men who are engaged in business, to the pastoral office. It is the duty of churches, if it be in their power, so to provide for their ministers as to keep them free from the entanglements of worldly business: 1 Cor. ix. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 4. The appointment of deacons, or stewards, to manage the temporal affairs of the church, will generally be found not only useful but necessary. On these points, however, each society has a right to judge and determine for itself.

§ 4. *On terms of communion.*

Terms of communion intend those conditions on which persons are admitted to the Lord's supper, and the other privileges of the church. No terms of communion ought to be insisted on, in the present day, but such as were insisted on by the apostles. To insist on unscriptural terms of communion is an antichristian practice. Terms of communion relate either to faith, or religious experience, or practice.

The New Testament authorizes the insisting but on one article of faith, in order to christian communion, *i. e.* the belief that Jesus is the Christ. It is antichristian to require subscription to any creed, or articles of faith, of mere human composition, or a verbal assent to any doctrines, or opinions, as a term of communion. The mind should be left unfettered, the conscience free, and the judgment unbiased.

When persons first believe, they cannot be expected to have much christian experience, as experience is knowledge gained from practice. The apostles, and first christians, never made the relation of an experience a term of communion; it follows that to do so is unscriptural and antichristian.

As persons in the apostolic age were, and of course still ought to be, received into the church on their first professing the faith of Christ, much christian practice cannot be expected prior to their admission to communion: it ought to be deemed

sufficient that they show a disposition to unite with the church, and obey the precepts of the gospel. On one point it may be proper to be more particular : it is baptism. In the days of the apostles there could be but one opinion on this subject ; because there was but one mode of practice ; but now it is far otherwise. Some believe that none ought to be baptized but believers, and they by immersion : of this number is the writer of these pages. Some believe that infants ought to be baptized, and that sprinkling is baptism. Others think that baptism was designed to continue no longer than the apostolic ages, except in the case of Jews or heathens being proselyted to christianity. It is not intended to discuss these opinions here ; but it is contended that we have no more right to judge for others, and make our judgment a rule of action for them, on the subject of baptism, than on any other point of faith, or religious practice. We can have no right to exclude persons from communion with us for not making our views of baptism their rule of conduct, unless we can prove that we have a claim to dominion over their faith and conscience, at least so far as relates to baptism. It ought to be remembered that the table at our Lord's supper is the Lord's, not ours ; consequently that we ought not to reject any whom he hath received, *i. e.* who believe on his name, and show a disposition to obey him according to their views of his gospel.

§ 6. *General conclusions.*

On the whole we come to the following conclusions :

1. Christians who differ in their opinions may unite in the same church, without violating any precept of Christ, or infringing each other's liberty.

2. No person who professeth faith in Christ, unless he evidently hold the truth in unrighteousness, ought to be denied access to the Lord's table, or any other privilege of a christian church.

3. Every church has a right to adopt that plan of discipline which its members agree on, as in their judgment most agreeable to the gospel, and most calculated for edification ; but no church has a right to insist on its own regulations as binding on others, nor disunite themselves from them if they prefer different regulations.

4. Churches which differ materially in their plans of discipline may unite in the bond of christian love, for mutual edification and the general promotion of the gospel.

5. Unchristian and evidently immoral conduct is the only object of censure.

6. Things indifferent are never to be so far insisted on as to break the peace of the church.

7. Christian liberty is ever to be carefully preserved and cherished.

A
BRIEF STATEMENT

OF THE

Doctrine of the Trinity,

AS IT APPEARS TO A PLAIN UNDERSTANDING.

IT is somewhat remarkable, that among the first dissenters from the establishment, though many of them objected to the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian creed, few or none objected to the main substance of it. In the year 1695, warm debates arose within the pale of the established church itself, concerning the doctrine of the trinity. It was vehemently contended, on one side, for three distinct persons in the godhead; on another, for three distinct characters or modes of acting: at length, a considerable number of dissenters adopted the latter of these opinions; but, to this day, the majority of dissenters seem to be as zealous in defence of the former, and denounce against their opponents the same penalties, temporal and eternal, as St. Athanasius himself did, or whoever personated that popular saint. What could induce any one, at first, to impose a numerical paradox as an article of religion, and attempt to terrify those, whom he could not hope to argue into a persuasion of it, 'tis hard to say; but it is still more difficult to account for the tenacity with which this mysterious article of faith is still main-

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tained, where neither church authority nor church emoluments can have any influence.

To think that the Creator of all worlds, the Omnipresent Deity, whose glory, whose providence, and whose attributes, are co-extended with the remotest stars—to whom this world is but a point, an atom, infinitely less than we are able to conceive—should divest himself of this boundless majesty—crowd all his wonderful attributes into a human body—languish, suffer, and die—yet remain immortal, omnipotent, immutable—and throughout the infinity of space continually act, with undiminished energy, as the great source of life and happiness to all, himself the infinitely blessed, ever-living, and only true God : to believe all this, perhaps requires as wide a stretch of human credulity, as to maintain (with the Roman catholics) that the Omnipotent, having first shrunk into the form and state of man, is still further contracted into their consecrated wafer, yet all the while retains all the fulness of the attributes, all the immensity of the nature of the godhead ! If there should be found in the holy scriptures (besides mistranslations and interpolations, &c.) any obscure text, that seems to clothe the ambassador of God with some of the attributes of God himself, or to claim equal reverence for him who declares himself sent, as for the being who sent him ; is it not manifest injustice to the scriptures, and to ourselves, to strain such expressions into a meaning directly opposite to the plainest declarations of Jesus Christ himself, instead of interpret-

ing them by the general tenor of the history, and by the maxims of common sense?—When Jesus, taking a piece of bread, breaks it, and gives to his disciples—saying, “This is my body,” we are not, I hope, at this day, required to believe that he was then holding, not the bread, but his own body in his hand. When, again, he says, that, “he and his father are one,” are we to understand him as asserting that he was his own father? and when, immediately afterwards, he tells us that he and his disciples are one, does he mean that he had but one disciple, and that this disciple was himself? If we could be reconciled to the self-contradiction and bad arithmetic of the trinitarian system, we should find, after all, that it is a mere question of arithmetic; for three beings exactly similar in essence, and agreeing in action, necessarily coincide in our imagination into one, and therefore the moral effect of this creed would be but nugatory, were not the attributes, as well as the person of the Deity divided, and some unamiable views associated with the first person of the trinity, which have lessened the comforts of social life, and produced gloom and austerity in the minds of individuals: witness Calvin himself.

Decisions of Common Sense.

To the Editor, &c.

I AM a plain man, one of those who consider the great doctrines of christianity to be plain and easy to comprehend, and take common sense for my guide in matters of religion. To me it appears that many of the controversies which have so long agitated the christian world might be easily settled by the exercise of a little plain good sense on the facts and declarations of scripture. Permit me, as a specimen, to present your readers with a sample of what may be done in this way in reference to the different opinions which obtain respecting the person of Christ.

I take for granted that christians of all parties will fully admit, at least in words, that there is but one God. On the ground of this admission, taking common sense for my guide, I go to the examination of the controverted point whether Christ be properly God; and the following easy solution of the matter naturally presents itself. If Christ be God, whatever is said of him must be true of God: for common sense dictates that what is true of him must be true of his proper person; indeed the two parts of this position seem identical: therefore, if his proper person be divine, very God, nothing can be true of him but what is true of a divine person—of the very God. To deny this is in fact to say that that may be true of Christ which is not true of him. Such self-contradiction

diction may be admissible by those who would build faith upon the ruins of reason, but can never be admitted by those who choose to retain the use of common sense. On the ground just stated it follows, that if Christ be very God, wherever he is mentioned in the New Testament the word *God* may be substituted; for it can be no departure from truth to substitute one name in the place of another, when both are equally applicable to the person spoken of: yet such a change of terms would make an alteration that would perhaps startle the advocates for his proper godhead, though perfectly accordant with their avowed opinions. We should then read Matt. i, 18, “ Now the birth of *God* was on this wise; when as his mother Mary, &c.” Chap. iii, 13, “ Then cometh *God* from Gallilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.” Chap. iv, 1, “ Then was *God* led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” John iv, 6, “ *God* therefore being wearied with his journey sat thus on the well.” Chap. xviii, 12, “ Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took *God* and bound him.” Chap. xxi, 20, “ The place where *God* was crucified was nigh unto the city.” 1 Cor. i, 23, “ We preach *God* crucified.” These are a few out of the many specimens which might be given of the manner in which the New Testament would read if the word *God* was supplied where Christ is mentioned: however absurd such phraseology may appear, I repeat, if Jesus Christ be God, the adoption of it can be no departure from truth. As common sense,

without any laboured effort, at once discovers that many things are spoken of Christ which could never be true of God, it cannot avoid the conclusion that Christ is not God, for had he been God such things could no more be true of him than they are of the one God, the Father of all. God could not be born, could not increase in wisdom, could not have a mother and brethren, could not be circumcised, baptized, and tempted, could not be exceeding sorrowful even unto death, could not be bound and beaten with stripes, could not be crucified and slain, could not be buried and raised from the dead ; but all these things are related of Jesus Christ, and, if we believe the gospel history, we ought to admit they are strictly true of the very Christ, the son of the living God : but then it will unavoidably follow that Christ is not, cannot be the very God. This then is the decision of common sense : *i. e.* the long-continued controversy respecting our Lord's divinity may be decided by plain illiterate men, simply by a sober attention to the plain facts recorded in the New Testament, and the exercise of reason upon them. If these facts be true, Christ could not be God, for if he had been God he could not have been born, he could not have died, he could not have been raised from the dead. In the view of common sense the asserting that Christ is very God involves a denial of the great facts which are at the foundation of christianity, though I suppose those who so often make that assertion do not perceive it.

To drive me from my ground, as an advocate for the use of reason and common sense in matters of religion, I have been told a great deal about carnal reason, and the danger of listening to carnal reasoning ; but I have never been able to comprehend what this meant, though I think I have perceived the design of the persons who talked so : for reason is certainly the gift of God, and he would hardly have given us reason, had he not intended we should use it ; nor can I see how we can judge of any thing but by the use of reason ; nor have I been able to discover how reason can be carnal. I have indeed seen many persons who were carnal and sensual, evidently because they did not make a proper use of their reason ; besides, I find that those who cry out the most against reason, make use of reason whenever it suits their purpose, and never say any thing against it only when it seems to militate against their notions, and even then they attempt to reason against the use of reason, which is very absurd. I have been led strongly to suspect, that when they talk against reason they wish us to believe what is unreasonable, and to lead us imperceptibly to what I have been told was once a popish maxim, “ that ignorance is the mother of devotion.”

To convince me of the fallacy of my conclusions, I have been told, what has appeared to me altogether a riddle, about *two natures* in Christ ; that some things are spoken of him as God, and others as man ; and that the same things are true of him and not true of him at the same time : but

this is so contrary to common sense that I have never been able to comprehend it; in fact, it seems to make nonsense of the scriptures; for how can the very same person be incapable of being born or of dying, as God must ever be, and yet be actually born and actually die? I have been told indeed that this is a great mystery*, and that I must believe it without understanding it. That it is a great mystery I have never denied, and that, if believed at all, it must be believed without being understood I readily admit; but if a mystery, I know not what we have to do with it, for I read in the scriptures that secret things belong unto the Lord, and revealed things to us; and a revealed mystery is a secret told, or a thing before mysterious opened and made intelligible; nor have I ever been able to find out how to believe what I do not understand.

After all, I have been warned of the danger of denying the godhead of Christ, but, not being

* 1 Tim. iii, 16, "*He who* was manifested in the flesh." This is the reading in the text of Griesbach's second edition of the Greek Testament. "All the old versions (says Dr. Clarke) have *who* or *which*." And all the ancient fathers, though the copies of many of them have it now in the text itself, $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ *God*; yet, from the tenor of their comments upon it, and from their never citing it in the Arian controversy, it appears that they always read it " $\theta\epsilon\varsigma$ *who*, or $\theta\epsilon'$ *which*." As the ancient way of writing $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ was by the abbreviation $\Theta\varsigma$, it is apparent that there needed no more than the interpolation of the central mark of the theta to change the sense in conformity with the opinion of those who were determined to make the scripture bend to their doctrines.

able to perceive how any danger can attend the denial of what is incompatible with the plainest facts and declarations of scripture, as well as contrary to common sense; and being resolved not to be frightened out of the use of that reason which God hath given me, I go on, resolved to bring every thing in religion to the test of *common sense*.

A View of Unitarianism,

AS CONNECTED WITH

VITAL GODLINESS.

WHATEVER may be thought sublime in theory ought to be scrutinized as to its real utility, and the utility of religious doctrines is in exact proportion to their tendency to promote vital godliness, *i. e.* to generate true piety, solid virtue, and unassuming goodness. Unitarianism, though it derives no sublimity from obscurity, though it awes not by the mysteriousness of its appearance, but is confessedly the most simple and comprehensible system of religion ever maintained under the christian or any other name, is eminently calculated to influence the heart and life; in other words, to promote vital godliness. This is what I undertake to show in this paper.

When it is proved that the unitarian doctrine is clearly the uniform doctrine of divine revelation,

which has been done by many able writers, it must necessarily follow that it is closely connected with vital godliness ; for what comes from, and is the truth of God, must lead to him, tend to fill the mind with pious sentiments and dispositions, to produce the image of God in man, and stimulate to an undeviating course of obedience. Various causes may obstruct the production of these effects for a time ; but when the doctrine is clearly conceived, and its influence deeply felt, in all its bearings and tendencies, I am persuaded the result will ever be found most favourable to experimental and practical christianity.

Did I not wish to avoid whatever bears the least resemblance to Pharisaical boasting, I might mention many instances which I have witnessed of the holy and happy effects of unitarianism, not only in arresting the progress of, and turning to the divine testimony those who were in the road from reputed orthodoxy to scepticism, and in recovering those who were actually caught in the vortex of infidelity, but also in improving the character, and increasing the happiness of persons, who, though steady believers, had their minds constantly embarrassed, and the influence of the gospel upon their hearts much weakened, by the admission of the inexplicable dogmas of popular systems.

I might also insist on the wonderful effects in the hearts and lives of men of various classes in society, produced by the preaching of the apostles, which was strictly unitarian, according to the ac-

counts given in the book of Acts ; but on this, though an argument of great weight, I shall not now enlarge. I shall content myself with making a few general remarks, which naturally arise from an impartial view of the unitarian doctrine.

I suppose it will be generally admitted that no doctrine can affect the heart, and influence the conduct, any farther than it is understood ; for there seems to be no avenue to the heart but through the medium of the understanding. Incomprehensible and irrational notions may appeal to the passions, and agitate the feelings with terror or with joy, by the false sublimity they derive from their obscurity, by the imposing solemnity with which they are asserted, by being regarded as a succedaneum for steady piety and undeviating virtue, and by the awful sanctions erroneously associated with them ; but they cannot rationally influence the heart and life. The unitarian doctrine, its enemies being judges, is most simple and comprehensible, so much so, that they have wrongly supposed it to be plain even to dulness and insipidity. If then it be calculated to inspire men with steady principles of piety and virtue, and to warm their hearts with benevolence (and that it is capable of doing this I shall show presently), its tendency to promote vital godliness cannot be reasonably doubted ; for it appeals at once to the understanding, and is on a level with the common sense of unlearned men. It is, what a doctrine intended to promote true godliness in the world ought to be, rational, easy to comprehend, suited

to the leisure of the bulk of mankind, and a plain, though narrow way to moral excellence and happiness. It is a fondness for marvellous and inexplicable things, generated and fostered by ages of misconception and prejudice, that prevents this from being perceived.

Unitarian views of God have a tendency to promote the most exalted piety and virtue, and to render men happy in all circumstances. Unitarians view the Creator and Supreme Governor of the Universe, who upholds and directs all things, as one undivided Being; they believe that he is essentially loving and merciful, at all times, and to all his creatures; that he is the common Father of all; that he orders every thing in wisdom and goodness, and will make every thing that takes place conduce to the individual and general happiness of mankind; that there is nothing in God, or that can proceed from him, that is in the least contrary to the purest goodness; that he neither wills nor desires any thing respecting his rational creatures, but their improvement and happiness. How can these sentiments fill our minds without our seeing all things in God, and God in all things? without our living under a sense of his presence, considering every thing as coming from his hand, and having a regard to him in every thing we do? They are certainly calculated to fill us with the highest admiration of his character, the strongest confidence in him, the most cheerful submission to his will; to yield great consolation in affliction; to inspire the most ardent love to God and man;

in a word, to produce the highest-toned piety, virtue, and benevolence. I know that these effects can only be produced gradually, as the sentiments producing them imbue the mind and habitually associate with the feelings.

Unitarian views of Christ have a direct tendency to promote vital godliness. Viewed simply as a man whom God hath exalted and glorified in consequence of his obedience, Christ is perceived to be more nearly related to us than he could be, if a being of an order different from ourselves, and the suitableness of his example is more evident and striking. Viewing him as our elder brother, made in all things like unto us, our feelings are the more excited towards him, we feel the more interested in all that he hath done and attained. Considered as one of the human race, his example is perfectly suited to us, and the imitation of it appears practicable. Hence, from his example associated with his doctrine, we may derive constant support and encouragement, when called to struggle against powerful temptations, to endure severe afflictions, or to perform the most difficult duties. No pretence to excuse our want of conformity to his likeness, by urging the natural disparity between him and us, remains. The great reward he hath attained assures us what will be the happy and glorious issue of an unwearied course of piety, virtue, and goodness, and inspires us with zeal and perseverance; for what a man hath attained, men may attain; if we imitate him here, we shall be like him in glory hereafter. The tendency of

these views to inspire the most powerful motives to holiness, and to fill us with strong consolation and everlasting joy, appears to me most evident.

The views unitarians entertain of other religious doctrines, tend effectually to secure the interests of vital godliness. They admit no excuse for ungodly tempers, on the absurd ground of hereditary depravity, nor for the excesses of the passions, by irrationally supposing them to be inflamed by an invisible and most potent adversary. They reject the monstrous notion which tends to sap the foundation of moral obligation, that another person has been righteous in our place and stead, and admit no man to be righteous any farther than he doth righteousness. They assert that every man is approved or disapproved of God, according to his real character; that all the virtuous and the good will be glorified with Christ, and all the wicked excluded from his kingdom. They admit no godliness to be real but what is vital, what exists in the heart, and appears in the life, consisting in a habitual course of piety, accompanied by virtue and goodness.

As it so manifestly appears that unitarianism is eminently calculated to promote the cause of rational and vital piety, on which the moral improvement and happiness of mankind essentially depend, our regard to the glory of God, and our love to our fellow-creatures, ought to stimulate us to make the most active and persevering exertions to promote the spread of unitarian sentiments, and exhibit their practical tendency. Most ardently is it

to be wished, that every one who professes unitarian doctrines may feel their influence in a high degree, and attain to that exalted tone of piety, virtue, and goodness which they are calculated to produce; this will be the way, if I may be allowed the expression, to *live down* the objections of our adversaries.

☞ The three last articles are extracted from the second volume of the **LONDON MONTHLY REPOSITORY OF THEOLOGY AND GENERAL LITERATURE**; a periodical publication commenced in 1806, and undertaken with a view (as it is stated in the prospectus) “to try whether, in the present advanced state of knowledge, it were not possible to carry on a work of which the fundamental principle should be the **RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT** on all religious questions, and which should display, as its leading design, the *utility* of **LEARNING** and the *necessity* of **REASON**, as well with respect to understanding as to defending the christian doctrine; and invite christians of all parties to examine important opinions with impartiality and diligence, to discuss controverted points with moderation, and to differ from each other with charity.”

It is farther observed, that “a slight reference to the few magazines which are devoted either wholly or partially to religion, will show that the supporters have erected their own peculiar opinions into a standard of *orthodoxy*, to which all their correspondents must conform. *Audi alteram partem* is a maxim in civil, but not in theological justice. It is neither calumny nor unkindness to ascribe to the conductors of our religious magazines the principle which they avow—that it is presumptuous to call truth (that is, *their own system*) in question, and dangerous to examine error (that is, *every system*

besides their own) with impartiality. The justice of the pretensions of the MONTHLY REPOSITORY to *singularity* in this respect may be determined by an appeal to the volumes already published ; in which will be found communications from respectable writers of different parties, and of opposite creeds, on several of the most important points of theology. This honourable peculiarity (says the prospectus) the MONTHLY REPOSITORY shall never forfeit ; it is free to every writer of good sense and good temper, whatever be his faith, or his want of faith."

That the principles of those who conduct this publication are UNITARIAN is abundantly manifest ; and with those principles, such a liberal plan is perfectly consistent.

The contents of the MONTHLY REPOSITORY are arranged under the following heads : I. History and Biography. II. Miscellaneous Communications. III. Biblical Criticism. IV. Review of Select Books. V. Original Poetry. VI. Obituary. VII. Literary and Religious Intelligence. VIII. A List of New Publications. Each number contains fifty-six octave pages, neatly printed, and the whole forms, annually, one large handsome volume, to which is affixed a copious index.

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A Theological Conversation.

To the Editor of the Monthly Repository.

SIR,

IT gives me great pleasure to hear of the increasing circulation of your very useful magazine, as it is a very excellent medium for the diffusion of unitarian sentiments, and affords an opportunity to many of our persuasion, to inform our neighbours of the rising progress of that important truth, from which, unhappily, the great body of christians has so long run astray. No effort should, I think, be left untried to bring back our wandering brethren from the maze of error in which their teachers endeavour to keep them entangled; and if we can convince the teachers themselves, so much the better it is for the cause which must, whether the present generation chuses it or not, ultimately succeed.

A circumstance that occurred to me the other day, led me to apprehend that the difficulties are not so great as we are sometimes apt to imagine. I overtook, on the road, a person with a bible in his hand, taking his walk, in the morning, from a small country town. I supposed him to be a mechanic of the place; and, in passing him, congratulated his early application to study, and expressed my satisfaction that his time was so well employed. This led to a conversation, in which I learned that he was not a mechanic, but a man of

study, acquainted with the bible in its original languages, and minister of the methodist congregation in the town, in lady Huntingdon's connexion.

We chatted together on the importance of religious meditation, and the great duty imposed on every christian, to form a true conception of his relation to God through our Saviour ; and I observed how much I was indebted to the study of my Hebrew bible, by which I was first led to understand clearly what God had chosen to reveal of himself, and how to worship the God of Jesus Christ, who in earlier times was known by the names of Jehovah and the God of Israel. You do not then, he said, worship the plurality ? No, sir, I replied: God has said, " Thou shalt worship no other gods but me ;" if he had said to me thou shalt worship the plurality, I should undoubtedly worship it ; but I cannot admit of any term in religious matters which is unscriptural, and is the invention of human reason. He wished then to convince me that a term might be used which was not in the scripture ; talked of essence and trinity ; but I kept to the same point, that as they were the invention of men, a true christian could have nothing to do with them ; he had a master, namely, Jesus the Christ ; he was ordered by that master to have no other master ; and all persons who set up for masters, and all persons who believe in these masters, were fallen from the truth as it is in Jesus.

After a little discussion on these points, he asked me whether I thought Jesus to be a man merely

like myself? I replied, yes, in every respect, except that he was more highly favoured by God, was the appointed saviour of mankind, and for his obedience was raised to be the head of all mankind. Upon this, my companion ran into the usual strain of gentlemen of this persuasion, assured me I could not be saved by this faith, and was necessarily doomed to perdition. To this I calmly replied, that such language was not very polite, and the mode of arguing was not good, for I might just as well say the same of himself; but I was taught not to judge any man; to his own Master I leave him, and I did not doubt that the Judge of all the earth would do right.

This language seemed to make some impression, and he undertook to convince me of my error, by running over a great quantity of texts of scripture, which I observed was a thing very easily done, and, however it might take with a congregation, could not weigh at all with real lovers of truth. We went then more deliberately to the work, taking one at a time, he beginning with the first, namely: *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* You know, sir, he said, that these are the words of scripture. Indeed, sir, I do not. Not know it! you surprise me; it is a verse in St. John's first epistle. I know, I replied, that such a verse is said to be in John's first epistle, but I do not believe that John ever wrote it. Then, said he, you might as well say that John did not write the other verses, and

we shall, by going on in this way, have no scriptures at all. Not so, I replied : because you have a bad guinea it does not follow that there are no good guineas ; but, if there are bad guineas abroad, you will take care to know the good from the bad. *St. John*, I repeat it, *never wrote that verse*. But how came it in the bible then ? Many learned men believe John to have written that verse ; and I never saw a Testament, whether Greek or English, without that verse in it. That may be, I replied ; but I have seen many Testaments without it, and I have a Greek Testament myself in which it is not. In the British Museum is a famous manuscript without it ; and, in fact, *there is not one Greek manuscript which has it*, unless the manuscript was written lately. Mr. Buchanan, a trinitarian clergyman, has lately visited the Hindoo christians on the coast of Malabar, who have manuscripts of the New Testament of a very old date, *and in none of these manuscripts is this pretended verse to be found*. My companion said he did not know how this might be, but he could not believe that the men who translated the bible into English would have suffered it to be in unless they were certain that it ought to be printed ; for they were men of great learning, and we had no one of greater learning in these times. I did not assent to the latter proposition, and was asked, what man alive had so much learning ? I replied, professor *Porson*, the Greek professor of Cambridge, has more learning than all the translators put together. He has investigated the autho-

city of this verse ; he declares it to be *spurious*. So did *sir Isaac Newton* ; so did *Mr. Emlyn*. *Griesbach* has struck it out of his Testament. The present *bishop of Lincoln* declares it to be *spurious* ; and I could mention many others of the same opinion.

My companion was not inclined to acquiesce in any of these authorities, and observed, that if the verse ought not to be there, the opinion contained in it was maintained in other parts of scripture, and was upheld by all the fathers of the church. To this I replied, that the Greek fathers certainly did believe in the trinity, though they did not quote this verse to support it, which was an additional proof *that they had it not in their Testaments* ; and I added, that if he was not satisfied in his mind that the verse was originally written by John, he ought never to quote it ; and I did not see how he could do his duty to God and to his congregation, if he used words as scripture which were not in scripture. It became him to examine the arguments on both sides, and to judge impartially upon a fair view of the subject.

My companion, I observed, was a little struck with what I said, for he had kept company with men only of his own profession, and had never been accustomed to have any of his notions called in question. He had been taught a certain routine of opinions in his college, just as most ministers, particularly those of the Calvinistic persuasion, who do not study the bible to learn what God teaches, but to confirm by texts of scripture, from

all quarters, what has been laid down by preceding teachers. This is a lamentable thing for the christian world. The people are kept in ignorance, nearly as bad as that of popery, and the false arguments repeatedly used by their preachers they do not dare to call in question, for fear of being stigmatized as heretics. My companion brought me, among others, that text in which Jesus himself is by these teachers accused of blasphemy, which, if he had uttered it, would have deservedly brought him either to the fatal tree, or given sufficient grounds for confining him in a mad-house. “Before Abraham was, I am,” said Jesus : that is, said my companion, Jesus says that he is God. How is that ? asked I. Why, said he, the term “I am” is the Hebrew name for God. If it is, I replied, then Jesus said only, “before Abraham was God;” and this was so well known a truth, that it required no prophet from heaven to tell us it ; but, I added, you know very well, that the Hebrew language has no terms to express the words “I am,” for in that language there is no present tense.

The carriage coming up that was to take me on my journey, I was obliged to leave my companion, with whom I left matter to ruminate upon ; and it struck me afterwards, that if you would give a place to this letter in your magazine, it might excite some of our unitarian missionaries to converse, wherever they have an opportunity, with the methodist teachers, and, hearing calmly all their denunciations, to set before them, gradually, those points which may lead them to investigate

the true meaning of the scriptures. The methodist has zeal, which only requires proper direction ; and many methodist teachers have been eminently useful in bringing men from their false notions of religion, and to worship the only true God, the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

I remain, &c.

Reflections on Eternal Punishment.

THE great distinguishing doctrines of christianity are those of a general resurrection, and a future state of impartial retribution. These doctrines, while they are suited to produce a powerful effect on the human mind, approve themselves to the unbiassed reason of the inquirer after truth. But unfortunately the scripture doctrine of future punishment has been so misrepresented as to appear utterly incredible. It has been long and generally maintained, that offences committed by frail and ignorant creatures during the infancy of their existence, will be punished with sufferings dreadful beyond conception, and lasting as the ages of eternity.

That such a doctrine, in an age, like the present, of inquiry and investigation, should meet with opposition is by no means extraordinary. It would, indeed, be more surprizing, if thinking and intelligent men could be induced to embrace so irra-

tional and barbarous a tenet, however ingenious and plausible the arguments adduced in its favour.

Perhaps a well-disposed but timorous believer might ask, “ as the doctrine of eternal punishment has been generally received among christians, and must certainly be a much more powerful antidote to vice than the opposite persuasion, why should it not be permitted to retain undisturbed its place in the popular creed ? ” He might add, “ wickedness is already sufficiently prevalent, and it is to be feared would be far more so, did vicious men believe that their punishment would not continue for ever.” But it might be fairly replied, that the doctrine of an *eternal*, and not the doctrine of a *temporary* punishment, has a licentious tendency ; and, however paradoxical this assertion may appear, a little consideration will make it sufficiently obvious.

That a being of infinite goodness, mercy, and compassion, as the Almighty is constantly represented, should condemn weak and imperfect creatures to eternal and exquisite misery, for yielding to temptations incident to the state in which he had placed them, is a position too shocking and incredible to be firmly believed. Hence men become secretly persuaded that they shall never be called to account for their actions. They cannot believe *all* that they are told concerning the penalty of sin, and therefore they reject the whole without discrimination. Both learned and unlearned have protested against a tenet which their natural good sense could not but perceive was so

derogatory to the moral character of God. Thus the doctrine of eternal punishment has promoted immorality, by means of latent infidelity.

But if men were informed that only a just and adequate punishment will be inflicted on the wicked, not that they will be eternally miserable, but that their sufferings will be exactly proportioned to their depravity and guilt, both in degree and duration, against such a proposition their minds would not revolt. To such a tenet they could not easily invent plausible objections. They must think it a *probable* doctrine in spite of themselves. And surely they would be more likely to be deterred from sin by the expectation of certain and dreadful misery to be endured through a long and an indefinite period, than by preposterous threats of never-ending torments, which they cannot seriously believe.

If we reflect on the ignorance of the far greater part of mankind, the little pains that have been taken in their infancy to inure them to the practice of piety and virtue, the difficulty of conquering habits, of eradicating propensities which have “grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength;” if we likewise consider the numerous and powerful temptations to which they are afterwards exposed in the world, how can it be thought consistent with infinite goodness, to punish the offences of few and fleeting years with everlasting anguish and despair?

It might indeed be alleged, with some appearance of plausibility, that as nothing more is re-

quired of any one than to make a proper use of the talents which have been committed to him, so, if he fail in the performance of this requisition, he is justly liable to endless punishment. But let us suppose for a moment that we ourselves had been in the state of those unhappy persons who have been brought up in ignorance and vice ; imagine that from our infancy we had been accustomed to associate with profligate companions, who had laughed at religion and treated moral obligation with contempt ; in addition to these deplorable circumstances, suppose we had never been warned of our danger till we had advanced too far in the paths of vice to be able to recede ; till our disposition was vitiated, and our sense of right and wrong almost obliterated ; what would *then* have been our characters and conduct ? Highly as we may now stand in our own esteem, there is little reason to think that in such a case we should have been better than others. We might then, in a literal sense, and with the strictest propriety, have been said to be educated for destruction. It would be frivolous, on that supposition, to say that nothing more was required of us than it was in our power to perform ; for to expect us to practise virtue in such circumstances, would be quite as unreasonable as it would be to require any one to work at a mechanical trade, when he had been apprenticed to another totally different.

The case of those who persist in disobedience to the divine precepts will appear still more worthy of commiseration, if it be admitted, as most of

those who plead for eternal misery maintain, that all mankind inherit a depraved nature from our original progenitors ; so that, from our infancy, we are naturally averse to good and prone to evil. And if it be farther conceded to the advocates for reputed orthodoxy, that men are not only radically depraved, but that they have likewise a malignant, subtle, and powerful spirit to contend with, who is incessantly plotting their destruction by means adapted to their depraved appetites, will it not appear to be the height of injustice and cruelty to punish them with eternal misery for not succeeding in a contest with so potent an adversary, and on terms so extremely disadvantageous ?

Nor will this difficulty be removed by alleging that the spirit of God is always ready to assist those who humbly apply for aid to the throne of grace : for are not the dispositions of men too corrupt, both by nature and habit, to desire this assistance ? Have they not a fixed aversion to that course of life which it would lead them to follow ? Was not this aversion contracted by means over which they could have no influence ? Did it not proceed from a cause which operated long before they were in being ? Was it not confirmed and increased by concurring circumstances at too early a period for them to be aware of its consequences ? Of what use then is the offer of that assistance to them which it seems they are unable to request, or even to desire ?

Whatever theory may be embraced with respect to the inherent powers of man, and the purity

or the depravity with which he is brought into the world, it cannot be denied that there is an infinite disproportion between a momentary period of transgression, and an eternal duration of punishment. On what principles of justice, then, can the latter be vindicated as the appointed consequence of the former? With our ideas of justice and equity, it seems utterly irreconcilable. And shall we, for the sake of maintaining a *favourite* tenet, affirm that, according to the most accurate ideas of justice and equity which we have been able to form, it is not an attribute of the Deity?

Nor does it diminish the force of this objection to allege that we are not competent to judge of the divine dispensations; for this is not a complex case, attended with difficulties too great for our limited understandings. It is an undeniable principle, to which every one above the state of idiocy must necessarily assent, that the punishment ought to be proportioned to the crime. And it is equally evident that between the period of human life and eternity, there is no proportion whatever. If then we were to conceive the Creator appealing to us, as he formerly did to the Israelites by the prophet, for the equity of his proceedings, must we not be compelled to answer in the negative?

The divine Being is not less unwilling that his creatures should be miserable, than we are to be spectators of their sufferings. But could we possibly be happy, in any circumstances whatever, while the horrible reflection must frequently occur,

that innumerable multitudes of our fellow-creatures, who began their existence on the same planet with ourselves, who possessed similar faculties, and were liable to similar impressions, with some of whom we were personally acquainted, must now be eternally groaning under the intolerable scourge of omnipotent wrath; for ever impelled, by the extremity of their torments, to curse their existence and blaspheme their Creator? Sooner than participate in such a happiness, let me perish for ever. I should in that case “wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.”

It is acknowledged, on all sides, that the same scriptures which are supposed to teach the doctrine of endless misery, at the same time represent the Almighty as just, merciful, and gracious. Were this actually the case, as the scriptures would then evidently contradict themselves, there would be wanting no other argument to invalidate their authority. On whatever grounds we ascribe moral excellence to God, on the same grounds we are compelled to reject the idea of eternal punishment. No sentiment so dishonourable to the Deity can possibly be true; nor ought it to be received, even though it were declared to us “by an angel from heaven.”

But let us study the scriptures with the same candour and impartiality that we would other writings of infinitely less importance; let us not sit down with a determination to discover in them absurdities; let us make a reasonable allowance for

the eastern phraseology which they certainly exhibit, and I am much deceived if we then find them to inculcate so horrible a tenet. We know that expressions are frequently hyperbolical. Can any one believe that if all the miracles which Jesus did had been recorded, “even the world itself” literally speaking, “could not contain the books which should be written?” But it would be less extravagant to conclude that the manuscripts in which these miracles were related, without a single repetition, would cover the surface of the globe up to the highest region of the atmosphere, than that an infinitely wise and benevolent Being would inflict endless sufferings on the creatures of his own hand, weak, ignorant, inexperienced, and beset on all sides with temptations, for the offences of a moment.

I would submit it to the consideration of our unitarian societies, whether it be not an object equally worthy of their attention to vindicate the doctrine of future temporary punishment, with that of defending the unity of God. Is it not as pernicious to think the Supreme Being vindictive, revengeful, and malignant, as it is to give his worship to another? May it not have a worse effect on our own moral character*? Is it not as likely

* The effect of combining such opposite qualities in our ideas concerning the character of the Deity, will probably be, that, although our dispositions are morose, unrelenting, and tyrannical, we shall deceive ourselves into a belief that we are all the while acting in strict consonance with the principles of justice, mercy, and forgiveness.

to promote infidelity? I remember reading, somewhere, that lord Shaftesbury once asked bishop Burnet if his religion taught the doctrine of endless punishment? and, being answered in the affirmative, replied, “ then it is no religion for me.” Is it not probable that many others are of the same opinion with his lordship? And why should not men be as cautious of entertaining opinions derogatory to the moral perfections of God, as they are of calling in question the truth of the scriptures? Not that they must necessarily be reduced to such a dilemma, but that it is a point of the first importance to form just and honourable notions of the divine Being, and of all his dispensations.

[*Monthly Repository.*]

Trinitarian Paradoxes.

To the Editor of the Monthly Repository.

SIR,

IT has been very justly remarked, that the scriptures know no such compound being as the God-man Jesus Christ. And your correspondent on the *Decisions of Common Sense* (see page 148) has shown the absurdity to which the scripture will be often reduced, if we apply the notion of Christ being “ very God” to various passages of the New Testament: yet, in defiance of such ab-

surdity, the God-man, in all orthodox creeds and catechisms, continues to usurp the honours so justly due, and which I trust unitarian christians are behind none in affectionately paying to *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by wonders and signs which God did by him.*

The church of England, in her second article, declares, “ that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.” It has been a favourite employment of orthodox divines, to enlarge upon this notion, which has been considered of such easy digestion as to be even “ milk for babes.” The “ Assembly’s Shorter Catechism” was designed for the instruction of children, and I remember to have been taught it by very pious and affectionate parents as soon as I could learn any thing. This “ form of sound words” as the orthodox often call it, declares, that “ Jesus Christ being the eternal son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever.” But I have now before me a manuscript upon this subject, saved from the destruction of many things more valuable, the curious contents of which you may be willing to preserve as a theological rarity. It is a translation from the Latin, as a school-exercise, in my own hand-writing, when I was not more than eleven years of age, and is as follows :

“ The astonishing extremes or unparalleled opposites in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, by J. R. [John Ryland], Northampton.

I. The eternal Jehovah once an infant of an hour old.

II. The immense God once a child of a span long.

III. The omnipresent God, filling all worlds, yet lying in a manger.

IV. The Creator of all things once a creature.

V. The Lord of all worlds, once a servant to poor man and washed his feet.

VI. The true God is reputed a deceiver of the people and a liar.

VII. The mighty God, once weak as a worm, and, as no man, unable to bear his cross.

VIII. The only wise God is blindfolded and buffeted as a fool.

IX. He that is God and none else is treated as less than nothing.

X. The holy God reckoned a confederate with the devil.

XI. God above all (Rom. ix. 5. in the original) is sunk into the dust of death.

XII. God blessed for ever is made a curse.

XIII. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is murdered by Jacob's children, the Jews.

XIV. The Lord of hosts is forsook by every being, upon the cross, and hath not one out of all his armies to attend and comfort him.

XV. The King of kings sold for 3*l.* 15*s.*, the price of a slave among the Jews.

XVI. The God of the whole earth becomes as poor as a beggar. 2 Cor. viii. 9. (in the original).

XVII. The God of absolute dominion over all worlds is made subject to his own law, both in its commands and curses.

XVIII. The Supreme Judge of men and angels is arraigned as a criminal at Pilate's bar, and condemned by his own creatures, his own guilty and wretched creatures.

XIX. The great Giver of eternal life suffers death; the Author of all pardons himself condemned to death for guilt.

XX. The Author of all resurrections in the vegetable and human world sinks down and dies.

XXI. The best beloved son of God dreadfully punished by his own father."

Such was the manner in which his school-boys were initiated into the greater mysteries of orthodoxy by the late Rev. John Ryland, to whose preaching I have seen crowds resort as to that of an eminently sound divine, whose doctrine interested, while his occasional excentricities amused them. Should the paper which I have transcribed be charged to eccentricity, I might safely challenge any of your orthodox readers (and I hope you have many such) to allow the premises that Jesus Christ is God and man, and then justly to reject my quondam preceptor's twenty-one stupendous conclusions.

But this well-intending and in many respects ingenious man was by no means singular in a fondness for "astonishing extremes or unparalleled opposites." I well remember to have read, not many years ago, a sermon on the passage, *Is not this the carpenter's son?* in which the author, a respectable minister now deceased, was transported into a pious rapture on this subject. Adopting the ancient tradition that Jesus had worked at his father's trade, he described the angels as paying him divine worship, and at the same time shouting through the empyreal—"The Carpenter! The Carpenter!"

It would, however, be unjust to the divines I have mentioned not to connect them with persons of extraordinary reputation, among whom they may be fairly classed upon this occasion. It was, I believe, an eminent father of the church who uttered that edifying exclamation, *Credo quia impossibile est—I believe because it is impossible*; and I think there is a similar sentiment somewhere in the “Private Thoughts” of bishop Beveridge. Christians have often pitied the deluded worshipers of an infant-lama; and critics have deemed the wounded gods of Homer an extravagance beyond the licence even of poetic fiction. Yet the pious and accomplished Watts, before he had put away such childish things, could discover “the mighty God in a babe at the mother’s breast.” During the same days of his “younger assurance” he deplored Mr. Locke’s deficiency of faith, because, after applying his mature judgment to a serious investigation of the scriptures, that great and good man could not “bear the infant Deity,” and found “a bleeding God” one of the “themes too painful to be understood.”

But I cannot forbear to quote, upon this subject, that ornament of our country and our race, whom, excepting an unhappy stain upon his judicial purity, both poetry and prose have designated not only “the greatest” but also “the wisest of mankind.” Lord Bacon, in his theological works, to a very orthodox “confession of faith,” in which he declares that “the blessed virgin may be truly and catholicly called *Deipara*, the mother

of God," has subjoined a paper from which I shall make a quotation which will enable me to leave my worthy old master in good company, or, rather, to show that the Rev. John Ryland, in his "extremes and opposites" is only a paraphrast of lord Bacon, in his "Christian Paradoxes."

"The characters of a believing christian in paradoxes and seeming contradictions.

"He believes three to be one, and one to be three; a father not to be older than his son, a son to be equal with his father; and one proceeding from both to be equal with both; he believing three persons in one nature, and two natures in one person.

"He believes a virgin to be a mother of a son, and that very son of hers to be her maker. He believes him to have been shut up in a narrow room whom heaven and earth could not contain. He believes him to have been born in time who was and is from everlasting. He believes him to have been a weak child, carried in arms, who is the Almighty, and him once to have died who only hath life and immortality in himself."

Should these passages, and those before quoted, offend, as they can hardly fail to do, some pious and considerate minds, let them remember that they are not the words of reputed heresy attempting to represent, and, so, liable to the charge of misrepresenting orthodoxy; but, on the contrary, the language of orthodoxy representing herself. Protestants have generally agreed to assail, either with sarcasm or grave censure, as the occasion might encourage, those professors of christianity who, "impious, eat their God." With what consistency the majority of protestants have so assailed the papists, I am at a loss to discover. Give me

leave to explain myself by offering a remark on a passage in the affecting story of lady Jane Grey, as I find it in Dr. Gibbon's "Memoirs of Pious Women."

"Lady Jane was early instructed in the principles of the reformed religion, which she seriously and attentively studied, and for which she was extremely zealous; and this, together with her other excellent and amiable accomplishments, greatly endeared her to king Edward. Her dislike of popery, particularly in one of its worst abominations, that of idolatry, was shown, as it is credibly reported of her, when she was very young. Upon a visit to the princess (afterwards queen) Mary, at New Hall, in Essex, she took a walk with lady Anne Wharton. Happening to pass by the chapel, lady Anne made a low courtesy to the host; at which lady Jane expressed some surprise, and asked whether the princess Mary was there? Lady Anne answered, 'No, but I made my courtesy to him who made us all.' 'Why,' replied lady Jane, 'how can that which has been made by the baker be he who made us all?' This speech of hers, it is said, being carried to the princess Mary, gave her a dislike to the lady Jane, which she retained ever after."

I am persuaded that no protestant has ever read this anecdote without applauding the ingenuity of lady Jane Grey, which, so far as appears, completely silenced her companion. Yet, had lady Wharton attempted a defence, the disputants agreeing that Jesus Christ, who was supposed to be resident in the host, was both God and man, her case would have been by no means desperate. She might easily have shown that the distinction, however great, between a man liable to hunger and the bread which sustained him, was lost in the comparison with "him who made us all." Thus the

orthodox protestant and the orthodox papist were equally justified in worshiping representations of Deity, or both involved in the same absurdity.*

I remain yours, &c.



THE
NECESSITY AND UTILITY
OF
Adhering to First Principles
IN RELIGION.

By R. Wright.

BY an adherence to first principles in religion is not meant an adherence to the first opinions we may happen to form on divine subjects; for they may, on further examination, be found erroneous; much less a blind and obstinate perseverance in the particular sentiments in which we have been educated, or which may be contended for as orthodox, by any particular denomination of christians; nor a determined adherence to what this or that party may call essential doctrines of the gospel; for all men are fallible; but a steady adherence to what, on serious and impartial examination, we discover to be the first principles of christianity as stated by Jesus and his apostles; which we shall find to be admitted by all the serious professors of the gospel.

Prop. I. *Various corruptions of christian doctrine, much superstition in practice, and many unchristian divisions have been produced, by christians not adhering to the first principles of their religion.*

For instance, had all the professors of the gospel, from the first introduction of christianity, strictly adhered to the doctrine of one God, as plainly stated in the sacred writings, the manifold corruptions of that fundamental principle of religion could not have existed; but, professing still to retain the belief of one God, in their reasonings concerning the nature and mode of his existence, they indulged in conjectures, and adopted inferences and conclusions, manifestly hostile to the divine unity. Had they regulated their inquiries, and bridled their conjectures, by the plain declarations of the sacred writers, taken in their most obvious sense, the world had never been distracted with their unintelligible definitions, and perplexing expositions of a trinity of persons in one undivided being: notions incompatible with the plain teaching of the author of our religion, and which shock reason and common sense, had, in that case, remained unknown.

Again, had the rational and scriptural doctrine of the divine unity been closely adhered to, christians could not have fallen into the superstitious practice of offering divine worship to other beings, real or imaginary, beside the only living and true God, nor have imagined distinct objects of worship in

one undivided being. The root of that widespread superstition, which has for so many ages debased christianity, could never have stricken, in a christian soil, had not the professors of the gospel, in their expositious reasonings and conclusions, deviated from that first principle of all religious truth, the unity of God. Leaving this first principle, they soon lost themselves in a labyrinth of inexplicable mysteries, and the door was opened to the most absurd superstitions.

Endless divisions among christians was the consequence of departing from the first principles of the gospel, and introducing, as essentials of christianity, doctrines built upon inferences, and an arbitrary exposition of ambiguous words, and figurative passages of scripture. Had they been content to regard as the only fundamentals of religion those plain and simple truths which the gospel renders obvious to the common sense of mankind, brought every thing ambiguous, or which depended on inferential reasoning, to the test of those truths, and continued to walk in purity and love, the whole body of christians might have remained firmly united, and christianity would not have been disgraced by a hundred unchristian divisions. The consideration of the evils which have arisen from inattention to first principles should impress on our minds a sense of the necessity of adhering to them.

Prop. II. *A due attention to the first principles of christianity will enable the unlearned christian to detect the errors which still remain among the*

professors of the gospel, and help him to decide for himself on controverted points in religion.

That many errors still remain in the church must be evident to every serious person who reflects on the opposite opinions entertained by christians, on most subjects in religion ; for two opposite notions cannot both be true. Opposing parties are frequently charging each other with heterodoxy and heresy. How is the unlearned christian to determine for himself which of the clashing opinions are true, and which false ? I know of no method so safe, or so easy, as to bring every thing to the test of first principles, which are admitted by all parties.

1. Amidst the contrariety of opinions maintained respecting the godhead, all parties admit that there is but one God. Let the unlettered christian bring the notions which have so long divided the church into parties to the test of this principle, which is universally granted. Common sense will teach him that three distinct persons, subsistences, or intelligent agents, must be three distinct beings ; and that three persons, or distinct intelligent agents, each of which is strictly and properly God, can make neither more nor less than three Gods : consequently, if what all admit respecting the divine unity be true, what many contend for respecting the trinity must be false. He may easily perceive that it is much safer to abide by a principle which compels universal assent, and which accords with the plainest

dictates of reason, than to admit notions which reason cannot comprehend, and about which christians have ever been divided. In the justness of this conclusion he will be confirmed by an attention to the plain language of scripture. When he finds that the first principle of the law was, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord*; that the first of all God's commands to his ancient church was, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but me*; that Jesus himself taught the same doctrine, and that the great apostle of the Gentiles insisted that *to us there is but one God, the Father*, he need not hesitate to reject, as erroneous, the trinitarian hypothesis with all its perplexities. Thus, by the exercise of common sense on the plain declarations of scripture, and a determined adherence to a principle which all admit, the unlearned may find their way out of a labyrinth in which so many have been bewildered, and find deliverance from absurdities which have for ages disturbed the christian world.

2. What relates to the future destinies of mankind must strike every person of reflection as most momentous. On this subject, however, the opinions of christians greatly differ. The majority suppose that the wicked will be tormented in hell fire to all eternity: some suppose that they will be totally destroyed and cease to exist for ever; while others think that the whole human race will be ultimately pure and happy. How is the unlearned christian, who has but little leisure for reading and study, to judge which of these opi-

nions is true, and which erroneous? Let him bring them severally to the test of that leading truth of the gospel, that *God is love*, and that he acts in the character of a FATHER. It will naturally strike him that a being who is love is not likely to punish his creatures to all eternity; that it is impossible a loving father should either annihilate his offspring, or place them in eternal torments; but that it is agreeable to common sense to suppose he will find means to make them all ultimately virtuous and happy. He may justly reason that it is more likely for wise and good men to be mistaken, in the sense they give of a few phrases and detached passages of scripture, about which the most learned and pious differ, than that God should act inconsistently with what all agree is his revealed character and relation to mankind. By adhering to what is generally admitted to be a fundamental part of christian truth, the divine love and paternity, he may find relief from a variety of gloomy apprehensions, and attain to more cheering views of futurity.

3. While the christian world continue agitated by so many clashing opinions and perplexing notions respecting the person of Christ, how are plain men to know what to think on the subject? Let them steadily adhere to that first principle of christianity, which all parties admit, i. e. that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the son of the living God; and receive or reject what is matter of controversy as it agrees or clashes with it. Common sense teaches that the same individual

person cannot be a being of two distinct orders at the same time. The same person cannot be a man and a creature of an inferior class ; he cannot be of the angelic order and one of the human race ; much less can he be the self-existent God and a creature at the same time. If the power of God transformed a man into an insect, it must cause him to cease to be a man ; so if God chose to become man he must necessarily cease to be God ; for things essentially distinct cannot become identical. Such are the dictates of common sense. As all christians admit that Christ was truly man, and this is so clearly the doctrine of the gospel that it cannot be questioned, the unlearned may safely reject as erroneous all notions concerning his person which are inconsistent with his true humanity.

4. All notions that are irreconcilable with the idea that Christ actually died and rose again must be false ; for his death and resurrection are so plainly stated in the New Testament, that all christians admit their reality, and receive them as essential truths of the gospel. Common sense teaches that God could not die ; consequently, that if Christ had been truly God *he* could not have died and risen from the dead ; that the second person in the trinity could no more die than the first or third ; and that, if the popular notion of the divinity of his person be true, the real Christ was incapable of dying. It follows that, as it cannot be denied that the real Christ died, not merely what was not essential to his existence, he could not be the true God.

5. While christians are divided about the doctrine of atonement and satisfaction for sins, they all agree that the free forgiveness of sins is an essential doctrine of christianity, and that the free mercy of God is plainly revealed in the gospel. The unlearned may decide between the contending parties, by bringing the points on which they differ to the test of those in which they agree. Nothing but common sense is necessary to teach an impartial person that if God be merciful he cannot be vindictive ; that if he acts towards sinners on the ground of free mercy he does not stand upon satisfaction to his justice and the atonement of his wrath ; and that, if he forgives sins freely, he does not cancel them on the ground of satisfaction having been previously made, by a righteous person, on behalf of the offender. Common sense must ever dictate that a debt cannot be both paid and freely forgiven ; that the sentence of law cannot be executed and the offender pardoned.

6. Some christians contend that man will continue to live when he is dead, in a separate state, before he is raised from the grave ; others contend that he will remain completely dead until the morn of the resurrection ; all acknowledge that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and that the future state of man is inseparably connected with the resurrection from the dead. Here again the illiterate has only to use his common sense in order to decide which opinion is most consonant with what both parties acknowledge to be an essential doctrine of christianity.

7. All christians agree that sinners are justly charged with, and made accountable for, all the iniquities of their hearts and lives; that they ought to repent of every transgression, and will certainly be punished if they continue impenitent: yet they greatly differ in their ideas of the state in which man is born, of the way in which he becomes a sinner, and respecting his ability to act right. On these disputed points the unlearned christian may decide for himself, by a due attention to those things in which all parties agree. Common sense will suggest to him the impossibility of sinners being charged, by a righteous God, with criminality, and rendered accountable for what they were subjected to, independent of their own choice, for what they could not possibly avoid, or for omitting what they had no ability to perform. There can be no room for a man to repent of any thing but what is properly his own act and deed; nor can impenitence be a crime in those who have not power to repent. The necessity of repentance, which all admit to be an essential branch of christian doctrine, proves that man has power to act right.

8. Though all the professors of the gospel admit that faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ is an essential part of christianity, many of them say that man has not power to believe; yet they admit that those who do not believe will be damned. This mistake may be detected and rectified by a steady adherence to what themselves confess to be a fundamental of the christian religion. If men cannot

become christians without faith, and they have not power to believe, it follows that they have not power to become christians; and it must be obvious to the common sense of mankind that it would be unjust to punish men for not being what they have not the power to become. If, as such persons contend, unbelief be a damning sin, faith must be a practical duty.

9. It seems to be a very common mistake, that men are justified and saved by faith alone. This mistake may be detected by what all christians admit to be an essential truth; i. e. that without holiness of heart and life, men cannot be finally saved; for it must strike every man of common sense, that if a holy life be necessary to the obtaining of eternal salvation, then sinners are not saved by faith only, and that faith, to be saving, must, as James taught, be accompanied by good works. If christians would but exercise common sense on what they all admit to be a leading truth of the gospel, i. e. the necessity of holiness of heart and life, they might see the fallacy of resting their whole salvation on faith alone.

10. Serious persons have often had their minds perplexed, and their peace disturbed, by the doctrines of partial election and arbitrary reprobation; but the fallacy of such doctrines may be detected by bringing them to the test of what all christians must admit to be an essential part of revealed truth, i. e. that God is no respecter of persons; that he will render to every man according to his works. Common sense teaches that if the Al-

mighty chuse a part of mankind to be the objects of his special favours, without any regard to their character, and reject others in the same arbitrary way, he is evidently a partial being, a respecter of persons, and does not render to every man according to his works. If the divine impartiality, which all profess to admit, be strictly adhered to, every notion of God's partial favour to some, and his arbitrary rejection of others, must be renounced; and the rational idea, that he approves or disapproves of men according to their real character, and deals with them according to their moral state, fully admitted.

The preceding observations are intended to show the unlearned reader the use he may make of what all parties of christians admit to be essential truths of revelation, in judging for himself on those points in which they differ; and that common sense, freely exercised on the first principles of christianity, will lead to a detection of the most material errors in religion.

Prop. III. There seems no way to effect a complete reformation of faith and practice among christians, but by returning to first principles; nor any way of terminating religious controversy, but by bringing every subject to that test.

On the meaning of particular words and phrases a complete agreement is not probable. In explaining particular passages of scripture, christians will continue to differ. It is only in the first prin-

ciples of religion, as we have defined them, they accord. This, then, is the only common ground on which contending parties can meet. Until they can agree to bring the points on which they differ to the test of those leading doctrines of truth in which they agree, and determine to retain or reject their present notions as common sense points out their consonance or dissonance with those undoubted truths of revelation, their differences will continue. Until religion be reformed, not by human authority, by the standard of tradition, or according to the opinions and maxims of a preponderating party, but by a general, uniform, and practical adherence to first principles, reformation will be incomplete.

Prop. IV. Whatever is contrary to the first principles of christianity must be false; whatever harmonizes with those principles is likely to be true.

As the first principles are the ground of the whole christian system, it is impossible the system at large should contain any thing dissonant to those principles; and, though certain sentiments may be doubtful, for want of full evidence, if they agree with the fundamental parts of christian truth, it is probable they are true.

Prop. V. *The sense of figurative terms, ambiguous phrases, and difficult passages of scripture, must be determined by a reference to first principles.*

Christians have been much in the habit of building doctrines upon figurative, ambiguous, and difficult passages of scripture; but such passages ought to be explained agreeably to the plain acknowledged and positive declarations of truth, and what are unequivocally the leading doctrines of the gospel; consequently, independent of such explanation, they ought not to be regarded as decisive proof. From the neglect of this rule, many mistakes, and much confusion, have arisen among christians; nor can these evils be avoided but by a steady adherence to first principles; for different persons will unavoidably reason differently when what is figurative and ambiguous is taken as the ground of reasoning and argument. On the leading truths of christianity, to which all parties assent, let the unlearned christian take his stand, and resolve to admit no sentiment, founded on figurative, ambiguous, and difficult passages, any further than it agrees with those truths. This will preserve him from many mistakes.

Prop. VI. *Inferences deducible from the first principles of christianity, are to be preferred to conclusions founded on figurative expressions, and detached passages of scripture.*

Every branch of religious knowledge is desirable; every part of truth important, but all we can know, on certain points, is attained by reasoning, and is only supported by inference. What is made out by inferential reasoning is more or less certain, according to the nature of the premises, and the agreement of the conclusions with them. No premises can be more indubitable than first principles. Inferences fairly deduced from them have strong moral evidence of certainty. Figurative and detached passages are not to be compared, as premises to reason from, with first principles. Considered by themselves, their import will remain dubious: consequently conclusions made from them must be very uncertain. Let plain christians judge for themselves, in every instance, whether the reasoning they hear used to support any particular religious opinion, be founded on first principles, or on what is figurative and detached.

Prop. VII. The fundamental truths of the gospel, which all christians admit, ought to be regarded as the grounds of christian union.

There is no prospect that christians will soon be agreed in all their opinions, or in the adoption of the same external modes of worship: but ought they on this account to continue disunited and at variance? Certainly not. To the first principles of religion they should adhere, as a

common ground of union, and consent to abide by them in all their proceedings in the worship of God. None ought to be excluded from any of the privileges of christianity who believe the leading truths of the gospel, and act consistently with that belief. There seems no way of healing the breaches which exist in the church, and of bringing christians to unity in one brotherhood, to walk together in love, but by inducing them to return and steadily adhere to the first principles of their religion. The unlearned christian need be under no apprehension of acting wrong, in receiving as his christian brethren, all who worship the one God, believe that Jesus is the Christ, and imitate his example.

It is presumed enough is said to convince the impartial reader of the necessity and utility of adhering to first principles. To his serious consideration it is submitted.

A

SEARCH AFTER TRUTH,

BRING

A Dialogue between Criton and Philo.

BY R. BRADBURN.

To Professors of Christianity in General.

Men and Brethren,

THOUGH a large preface to a small book is considered preposterous, yet a short one is in some degree necessary, and, in general, well received. With this in view, I shall briefly introduce the following pamphlet to your notice.

For the most part of my life, I have held the doctrines professed, by what are called orthodox christians, and much in the same manner, that is, without examination. But when I came to reflect upon them, and to search the scriptures impartially, for such doctrines as three persons in the godhead, a trinity in unity, and two natures in Jesus Christ, I could find no such words, nor any phrases analogous to them. But what fully convinced me of the erroneousness of those sentiments, was Mr. Wright's *Anti-satisfactionist*, a work that cannot be too highly valued. That I might put my opinions to the strictest investigation, I

wrote the following dialogue, in which I have adopted many of Mr. Wright's arguments, and sometimes in the author's own words. But as it was written without any intention of publication, there are no quotations marked.

Let not any be too hasty in blaming me for changing my sentiments: before they censure, let them examine.

Nottingham, October 21, 1808.

Criton. I am glad to see you, friend Philo; we have frequently talked of the principles generally received in the christian world. I could wish us now to examine, by the standard of reason, how far these principles agree with the scriptures in general, and with the gospel of Jesus Christ in particular.

Philo. So far, Criton, from objecting to what you propose, I am glad of the opportunity, provided you do not reason away the plain meaning of scripture, but make it agree, and harmonize with itself.

Criton. When I speak of using reason, in judging of scripture, I mean no more than what you have said, to make it harmonize, and agree with itself, in opposition to a false method, adopted by some, of selecting here and there a particular passage, without paying any regard to its connection. There are two opinions very prevalent, though both erroneous: the one de-

clares human reason to be a sufficient guide; in matters of the greatest importance, to the exclusion of revelation; and the other maintains that reason has nothing to do with religion, but that all must depend upon inspiration. The one makes man a God unto himself; and the other makes him only a machine in the hands of God. The Almighty requiring us to believe in a revelation, not manifested unto us, and yet binding upon us, is a powerful argument, to show the necessity we are under to use our reason, in matters of religion: for, if we have no criteria by which we may judge of revelation, we are then liable to be deceived; and if we have, how are we to use them, but by trying, comparing, and proving? The best judge of the matter; that ever was upon earth, said to those who heard him, *Search the scriptures, for they testify of me.* Now we know, that searching implies more than mere reading, and means a diligent, earnest, and studious examination. The apostle Paul highly commended the Bereans for searching the scriptures, to know whether those things which he taught were agreeable thereunto or not.

Philo. So far we are agreed: but you told me, the last time we were together, that you had altered your religious opinions, and wondered that you had remained so many years in error and ignorance, as you expressed it, of the truth. Now, for my part, I hold the same doc-

trines I always did, and never doubted the truth of them.

Criton. It is a maxim I have somewhere seen, that what a man never doubted of, he cannot be said to believe in ; that is, those principles he never called in question, he never examined, and, consequently, what he calls a belief in them, is nothing more than a bare assent of the will, without the aid of the understanding. If such a man's creed be true, it is so to him by mere accident.

One great means which produced a change in my religious sentiments, was the examination of those I had been taught, and always considered as infallible. Now, I would have you to make trial of the same method, and if it be agreeable, you may do this by way of controversy ; and I will give you what assistance I can, by becoming your opponent.

Then, in the first place, pray let me know what is your belief concerning God ?

Philo. Your proposal, my friend, is very agreeable, and I promise you, to state my opinions fairly, and to hear your objections candidly.

My sentiments of the Deity are the same as those of the greater part of the christian world. I believe there are three eternal, self-existent beings, united in one god-head, having all the same perfections and attributes; the one called God the Father, the other God the Son, and the other God the Holy Ghost; and yet these three,

being a Trinity in Unity, make but one God. I own it is not in my power to comprehend how such things can be ; because three, so united as to become one, is a mystery, which, though made an object of our faith, does not fall under the cognizance of reason to define.

Criton. If the proper use of language is to convey our ideas one to another, what idea do you convey of the self-existent Jehovah, when you say, there are three eternal, self-existent beings ? As the first, and greatest conception we have of God, is his self-existence, when you affirm there are three such beings, do you not convey the idea that there are three Gods ? But you endeavour to do away this charge by an absurd contradiction ; that is, by saying that three are not three, but one ; and then attempt to define this absurdity, with these unintelligible words, a Trinity in unity ; and, lastly, you call this contradictory doctrine a mystery, which, though you cannot comprehend, yet you must believe, because it is made an object of your faith. But pray, by what authority was the doctrine of three Gods in one made an object of faith ? Why, by the same authority that deified the Virgin Mary, and instituted the worship of saints and angels ; by the same authority that made it an object of faith, to believe that a quantity of wine, after a set form of words had been pronounced over it by a priest, was converted into the blood of Jesus, and that a little paste was transformed into his real

body; and these were the sentiments received by the greater part of the christian world, at the time of the reformation. What a pity that those brave men who effected that reformation, and swept away part of these errors, did not do away the whole. I have read some trinitarian writers, who seem fond of making witty paradoxes upon what they call the Godhead of Christ. When he, say they, was an infant in the manger, he was the ancient of days. When his mother held him by the arms, to keep him from falling, he supported the universe upon his shoulders. And when he was destitute of all things, he was then Lord of all.

“ This infant is the mighty Lord,
Come to be suckl'd and ador'd.”

I have read of a church in Italy, where the altar-piece represented an old man, a boy, and a dove: over them was written, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and underneath, these three are one. But let us examine upon what ground your plurality of Gods stands, as it respects plain declarations of scripture. And is not the asserting that there are more Gods than one a manifest breach of the first commandment, *Thou shalt have none other Gods but me!* Moses said to Israel, *Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God, there is none else besides him. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me.* Deut. vi. 4. xxxii 39. *Is there any God besides me?* Isa.

xlv. 5. When one of the rulers asked Jesus, which was the first and great commandment, he answered, in the words of Moses, *Hear! O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord*; the ruler replied, *thou hast answered right, for there is one God, and there is none other but he.* This plain unequivocal language runs through the whole scripture. Upon what then do you found your doctrine of three Gods in one?

Philo. Surely you know better than to think that I believe in a plurality of Gods. What I say is, that there are three divine beings united in one Godhead; but if I give you an epitome of my creed, respecting man's redemption, it may answer the double purpose of stating my sentiments and proving them. I believe, when man, by his disobedience to the divine command, committed sin, and brought evil into the world, God was provoked to wrath against him. Divine justice must be satisfied, or the sinner suffer eternally. The holiness and dignity of God would have been liable to impeachment, had the offender been set free, without an atonement. Man was thus situated with respect to his Creator, when God the Son, out of pure benevolence, proposed, in order to appease the wrath of the Father, and satisfy his justice, to suffer all the pain and sorrow due to man for his disobedience, and become a sacrifice for sin. This proposal was accepted by God the father; and thus, mercy and justice met together in the person of Jesus Christ; for sin, being an

infinite offence, because committed against an infinite being, required an infinite satisfaction; therefore, Jesus Christ alone, who was of himself infinite, could appease the wrath of God, and satisfy his justice.

Criton. With what difficulty are our prejudices removed! How hardly are we persuaded to part with an opinion that has been nourished and brought up with us, though it be ever so absurd! I thought sufficient proof had been advanced from scripture, to do away the doctrine of divinities, of Gods many, and Lords many. However, the contents of your creed are of so serious a nature, that they deserve a very particular examination.

You say, that God was incensed to wrath against man for his disobedience, and that, had not justice been satisfied by an atonement, he must have been eternally miserable; but I cannot find any thing of this in the Bible. I there read that God is love, that he is good and merciful, and that he is unchangeable: he says, *I am God, I change not*, and with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. But if ever he became wrathful and vindictive, he must have undergone *a change*; and if the sufferings of Christ were meritorious, and took away that wrath, there was then *another change* in the *unchangeable* Jehovah. That God is merciful to all his creatures, without requiring any vicarious sacrifice to make him so, is clearly set forth throughout the whole scriptures. I will

only recite a few passages, out of a multitude. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. The Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee. Deut. iv. 31. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isa. i. 18. Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? Ezek. xviii. 23. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Dan. ix. 9. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy, remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord! Psal. xxv. 7.* To say that the sin of a finite creature is an infinite offence, because committed against an infinite being, is to transfer the dignity of the *offended* to the *offender*, for no other reason than because he is an offender. But to talk of an infinite atonement, to say that a divine being, eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient, could be crucified and slain, to appease the wrath of another divine being, is the greatest of all absurdities; such a sacrifice is, in the very nature of things, an utter impossibility; besides, if the second divine being in the trinity possessed all

the attributes of the first, the justice of God the Son required an *equal atonement* with the justice of God the Father ; and what other divine being made satisfaction to *his* justice ?

Philo. I own, Criton, that your arguments seem very plausible ; but pray, how do you understand such scriptures as these ? *Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was numbered with the transgressors ; and he bare the sins of many.* Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6, 12. We are said to be *bought with a price.* 1 Cor. vii. 23. To be redeemed. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.* Titus ii. 14. Do not these and such like passages speak in plain terms of Christ's suffering upon the account of sin, and his making atonement for the guilty ?

Criton. Upon fair examination, Philo, you will find they have not any such meaning, nor is it possible they should. The prophet represents the Jews saying, we did esteem him smitten of God ; some read, we thought him judicially smitten. This was the case when Christ was crucified : they said he suffered *as a sinful blasphemer*, in that he said he was the Messiah, the son of God. But instead of the sufferings and death of Christ being the effects of divine

justice, they were procured by the most *iniquitous* proceedings of some of the worst of the Jews. Pilate strove more than once to release him, because he found no fault in him; and yet they persisted in having him crucified. Peter, in his sermon to the Jews, says, hear these words! *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs; ye have taken, and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain.* Acts ii. 22. 23. And Stephen tells them, that they had been *the betrayers and murderers of the just one.* Acts vii. 52. How horrible is the language that represents the sufferings and tortures inflicted on the innocent Jesus by his enemies, as trifling, nay, as nothing, compared with that anguish with which his righteous soul was afflicted by God his heavenly Father, when he poured out his wrath upon him, because he undertook to reconcile *him* to a sinful world. Such expressions, as the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all, and he bare the sins of many, are Jewish forms of speech, and must be understood in the same sense in one part of scripture as another. The priests were said to bear the iniquity of the congregation; but no one ever understood that the crimes of the congregation were imputed to them, and the *punishment* due to those crimes inflicted upon them: the scape goat was to bear away the sins of the people, and the prophet Ezekiel was to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, and the house of Judah. Ezek. iv. The

scripture never speaks of Christ reconciling God to the world; but of God reconciling the *world* unto himself, by Jesus Christ. We are said to be bought with a price; but such like words occur in the Old Testament, as well as in the new. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, is not he thy father, that hath bought thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6. *The anger of the Lord was bot against Israel, and he sold them.* Judg. iii. 8. and Psal. xliv. 12. Such language cannot, with the least propriety, be taken literally; for if I am the purchase of Christ's blood, and am asked who sold me? I can only answer, God Almighty; and for whom was I purchased? I could only say, for God Almighty: and this involves in it such an absurdity, as no logic is capable of removing. Christ is said to have redeemed us with his blood, because his death was the confirmation of his testimony; and he sealed the truths, which he had taught, with his blood; and God confirmed those truths, by raising him from the dead.

The gospel offers salvation freely, without price. But if the sufferings of Jesus Christ purchased salvation for us, what room is there for forgiveness? We are not, in this case, saved by *grace*, but by *merit*. The whole ministry of Jesus Christ sets forth the goodness and mercy of God, in forgiving and receiving the humble and penitent sinner. In the parable of the two debtors, he does not represent the creditor requiring a surety to pay debts, but,

because they have nothing to pay with, he freely forgives them both. Luke vii. 41, 42. And in that of the prodigal son, the father is not said to require an atonement for his son's past transgressions, but to receive him gladly, upon his return and submission. What representation can be more expressive of the benign character of Jehovah, than that given by the Messiah, in the vii. of Matthew. *If any of you being a father, have a son, who shall ask bread, will you tantalize him by offering him a stone? or if he should ask a fish, would you give him a serpent? Oh, no! human nature recoils at such ideas. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*

Had the death of Christ been a vicarious sacrifice, and man's salvation depended upon his belief in such a doctrine, surely our Lord would have directed his disciples to preach such essential truths; but neither before, nor after his resurrection, did he give them such instructions. When Jesus informed his disciples that he was to suffer, and be put to death, they were sorrowful, and much grieved. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that he would have told them that his death was necessary for man's salvation; and that his sufferings were to be the price of their redemption, if they really were so, in order to put an end to their sorrow? And is not his total silence upon the subject, a strong

argument against the doctrine? In all the discourses of the apostles, recorded in the Acts, this doctrine is no where advanced. Is not this a proof that it formed no part of the gospel they preached? Upon the whole, it appears evident, that the doctrine of the trinity owes its rise to a personification of the divine attributes; and that of the atonement, in the first place, to the folly of attributing human passions and frailties to the all-perfect Jehovah; and next, to a literal interpretation of some figurative passages in scripture.

Philo. If the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ were not a satisfaction for sin, how are we delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law? The law demands rigid justice, and is a stranger to mercy. No man, from Adam to Christ, was found able to fulfil its demands; nor do I conceive the law to have been given with an intention to have been fulfilled: it is a transcript of the divine mind; a manifestation of his eternal perfections; that by showing man the holiness and purity of God, he might see, as in a mirror, his distance from God, and his incapability of approaching to him. And thus it pointed to Jesus Christ, who would fulfil its precepts, and bear its penalties, as his substitute. The apostle calls it our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Criton. That the law of God is viewed in this light, by all who hold the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, I allow; but surely it is a most danger-

ous view of it. A law given to those who cannot obey it, is neither wise nor good; and to punish them for a breach of it, must be both unjust and cruel. Jehovah, who is both wise and good, could never be the author of such a law. The apostle tells the converts at Rome, that what the law says, it says to them who are under the law; but asserts, that the Gentiles had not the law. Rom. ii. 14. and iii. 19. It follows, that if Christ bore any curse for those who violated the law, it was for the Jews only; for the Gentiles, who had not the law, could not incur its penalties. But how does it appear that the law was a stranger to mercy, when it says, that God will show mercy unto thousands of generations, of those who love him, and keep his commandments? The law, in denouncing judgments upon those who transgress its commands, did no more, than the gospel does upon those who will not obey its precepts. The law which the apostle wrote most about, was the ceremonial law, the law of circumcision, and other rituals; and being under subjection to these, he calls being under a yoke of bondage. Gal. v. 1. The Jews were of necessity under this law, until Christ came, but it was altogether done away by the gospel.

Pbilo. Indeed, Criton, your arguments are so agreeable, both to scripture and reason, that I must do violence to my understanding, not to be convinced by them. But pray, in what does the dignity of the character of Jesus Christ con-

sist, and what came he into the world to perform ?

Criton. Our Lord declares his own person and character ; he says, *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3. *I can of mine own self do nothing ; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me.* v. 30. He applied the words of the prophet to himself. Isa. xlii. 6, 7. *The spirit of the Lord, said he, is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted ; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind ; to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* Luke iv. 18, 19, 21. He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel. It is true, he says, I and my Father are one, but he sufficiently explains himself, when he prays that his disciples may be one with him and his Father, even as they are one. John -xvii. 11. The apostle writes to the Hebrews, Chap. ii. *That it became him, by whom are all things, to make the captain of our salvation, in all respects, like unto his brethren ; that he might be made perfect through sufferings.* His ministry, his miracles, and, above all, his resurrection, were incontesti-

ble proofs of his being the true Messiah, that prophet which should come into the world, like unto Moses. Zeal for the glory of God, and good will to men, were displayed through all his holy ministrations. He taught that repentance, faith, and a holy life, were necessary for obtaining pardon for our sins, and acceptance with God. With what magnanimity did he reprove the vices and errors of the times in which he lived ! With what commanding evidence did he support his heavenly Father's honour and his own character, and confute his adversaries ! And with what compassion did he mourn over his obstinate hearers, and grieve at the hardness of their hearts ! *He went about doing good.*

Pbilo. I am now well persuaded of the truth of the doctrines that you advance, nor shall I be ashamed to profess my belief in them, though I know that such a profession will expose me to much censure from my old acquaintance : for how largely soever different persuasions may talk of liberality towards one another, yet the greater part of them are sufficiently bigotted, to consider the unitarian christians so heterodox, as not to deserve a name amongst them. But would these orthodox professors examine their principles, as you have done, and impartially compare them with the word of God, I am persuaded, that if they did not, in justice to the truth, renounce them, they would at least be more candid towards those who differ from them for conscience sake.

Criton. That you will meet with opposition from your old friends, is what I am well assured of; for their rulers, ever fearful of decreasing in number, if they discover a member doubting of the truth of his principles, immediately seek to reclaim his wandering thoughts, by assuring him, that such doubts proceed from the wicked one, and are suggested by the father of lies. Nay, some of them will not scruple to charge you with holding principles which you detest; for how many are there, who say, that the whole body of unitarians are deists! They might with equal truth, call them Mahometans. Mr. Penn, in a letter to Abp. Tillotson, says, “I abhor two
 “ principles in religion, and pity them that own
 “ them: the first is, obedience upon authority,
 “ without conviction; and the other, destroying
 “ them that differ from me, for God’s sake.
 “ Such a religion is without judgment, though
 “ not without teeth.”



Trinity twin-sister to Transubstantiation.

CALEB FLEMING has the following passage, in his “Survey of the Search after Souls,” p. 101:—

“The advantage given to popery by the trinitarian opinion, all may know who have ever conversed with a Romish priest. What I have

said I know to be a truth from my own experience; for, about the year 1727, as exactly as I can remember, a gentleman of genteel appearance and behaviour made an attempt to pervert me to the *catbolic faith*, as he was pleased to call it.—We had two interviews, and the conversation turned on several of the distinguishing tenets of that superstition. When we came, in the second conference, to debate on the subject of *transubstantiation*, the gentleman, after saying the most favourable things he could be able to say of that strange opinion, asked me what were my objections? I told him, I had principally two,—*transubstantiation was a contradiction to my reason, and to the testimony of all my senses*. He smiled and said, was there all my strength?—I told him if I was baffled there, he might be sure of a convert.—Then, replies he, if you are ingenuous and sincere, I am assured of you. And I do now confidently affirm, that a fundamental doctrine which you hold, even as a protestant, is equally contradictory to reason and sense.—Could he convince me of any such tenet, I again said, he might be assured, I was no longer a protestant. With an air of the utmost confidence he opened,—*The doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, sir, is altogether as repugnant to reason and to all your senses, as transubstantiation can possibly be*.—No sooner did I show him, he had widely missed his mark, and greatly mistaken the nature of my creed, but he affected to be beyond measure astonished! and

although he had before made me some advantageous offers, if I would embrace popery, he now professed to despair of making any good impression upon me. At parting, however, he was so courteous, as to assure me, he would pray for me.—I should have mentioned, that he pretended not to know, there were any protestants in England, so extremely heretical, as to deny the doctrine of the *trinity*; and would have it they could not be denominated believers in revelation; which I returned upon him, as an instance of great ignorance; since many English protestants of eminence, advocates for the religion of Christ, have, in their writings, absolutely disowned the absurdity. This is strictly true as a narrative of fact; and a *method* of perverting protestants which I doubt not is very common.”

[*Montb. Repos.*]

THOUGHTS

ON THE

UNITY OF GOD.

To the Editor of the Monthly Repository.

Sir,

Jan. 2, 1809.

THE existence of God appears from his visible works; for, as there can be no effect without a cause, and the material universe presents no objects to our senses but what are effects, the whole being a vast combination of effects, which

must have had some cause distinct from what visibly appears, no sufficient visible cause being discoverable, we are necessarily led to the conclusion, that an invisible Being exists, who is the first cause of all things. This Being must be intelligent, capable of design ; for in every part of creation evident marks of design appear, and in the constitution and arrangement of the whole, the most perfect intelligence, the most comprehensive design, is manifested. This Being must be powerful; for the most astonishing power is displayed in the magnitude, diversified forms, and wonderful organization, of his works; in the regular and efficient laws by which they are governed, the vivifying principle which animates his creatures, and the intelligence communicated to them. This Being is manifestly good; for the communication of life and so many gifts are unequivocal proofs of goodness: benevolence of design, and beneficence of conduct, appear throughout the creation.

One divine Being, possessed of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, must be capable of producing every thing that appears in the visible universe: only one such Being need be supposed to exist, to enable us to account for the whole phenomena of nature, and it is irrational to suppose more causes than are necessary to enable us to account for every thing we perceive. The supposition of more than one such infinite person is not only unnecessary, it is useless and irrational. It is useless ; for a multitude of such persons

could effect no more than one, as every thing that is possible can be done by one that is infinite. It is absurd to suppose the existence of more than one absolutely infinite person ; for infinity must comprehend every divine attribute in the utmost perfection ; consequently, a plurality of such persons could possess no more perfections than what are possessed by one such individual person, nor be capable of any operation, or of producing any effect, or in any higher degree, than what one such person is capable of performing and producing. A plurality of such persons can be no greater, nor any thing more, than one such person is ; for as there can be no degrees in that which is infinite, it can admit of no addition by an increase of persons. It is difficult, if not impossible, to form distinct ideas of three infinite persons in one divine essence, without supposing three gods ; for what is a distinct person but a distinct intelligent being ?

When we survey the creation, we discover a unity of design in its various parts ; they are connected together and fitted to each other, as parts of one stupendous whole. This unity of design shows them to be the production of one individual Being, of one will, of one hand. If in the divine essence there are three distinct persons, they must either be independent of each other, or two of them at least must be dependent on the other. If independent of each other, are they not three gods ? and is it not unaccountable that a unity of design should appear throughout the

universe? If each of them be the Creator, how can creation be the work of one being? If each be not the Creator, how can each be properly God? If two of the divine persons be dependent, how can each of the three be really God? for dependence is incompatible with proper Deity. If all three be self-existent, and co-eternal, how can one of them be a father, and another a son? Who can solve these difficulties? Yet solved they ought to be, before the doctrine of the trinity is admitted. How can that doctrine ever be reconciled with the light of nature and the dictates of reason? Surely, the works of God will never lead us to conceive of more than one first cause, one infinite subsistence; the supposition of more seems to me irrational, and it is absurd to suppose divine revelation to contain any thing irrational.

If any of the readers of your truly excellent Repository will attempt to solve the above difficulties, without crying out against reason, and throwing dust in my eyes, by talking about mystery and doctrines of revelation which cannot be understood, they shall have the thanks of

A CONSTANT READER.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE DEVIL.

For the Monthly Repository.

Halifax, Dec. 17, 1808.

TO the numerous sources of temptation is frequently added one, which indeed is supposed to be the primary source of every other, *viz.* the agency of a supernatural and malignant being, the enemy of God and man, who is supposed to have access to the human mind, and sufficient influence over it, to lead men into sin. We shall do well to attend to the consequence of adopting such an opinion. I think it is unfounded and prejudicial, and if the discussion of the subject impress this conviction upon the mind, it will be relieved from one of those superstitious fears, which are as unfriendly to virtue as to human happiness.

If we admit the existence and agency of such a being as the devil is usually described to be, we admit the existence of a being, who is not only the enemy, but the rival, of the great Supreme. To him, as is the practice of those, who are the advocates of such an opinion, we must ascribe the introduction of evil, the support and continuance of it; and though we suppose, as these persons do, that this invisible enemy of God and goodness will final-

ly be subdued, we shall be compelled to admit, that his power and knowledge are little less than infinite; that the former is often successfully exerted to destroy the harmony of creation, to corrupt and vitiate the hearts of men, and to introduce sin and misery into the world; that his acquaintance with the thoughts of men, by which he is able to adapt his evil suggestions to their peculiar circumstances, very nearly approacheth to that of the Being, “who searcheth all hearts;” and that he is inferior to God in the duration of his empire, rather than in the extent of it, and chiefly distinguished by the malignant nature of his designs. If we imagine ourselves subject to his power, we shall be apt to consider ourselves less culpable than we really are, when we deviate from the path of rectitude; for it will justly be considered as an alleviation of guilt, if not a sufficient apology for it, that the possibility of resistance was almost beyond our power, and we shall be discouraged from making the attempt if we suppose, that we are hourly exposed to the artifices of an insidious and potent adversary, who has been so far successful in the accomplishment of his designs, as to have introduced evil and misery into the world, contrary to the intentions and appointment of the great Creator and Lord of all. Must it not be admitted, that the conduct of those unenlightened heathens, who believe in the existence of such an evil being, is not altogether irrational, in paying him religious homage, to induce him to suspend those calamities of which he is supposed to be the author? For if he be independent of God, such

homage is justifiable; and if he be not, he must be his instrument; and if that be admitted, God is the author of evil, and that in a sense which is more derogatory to his perfections than to admit that he is so in a strict and philosophical sense, but that such evil is necessary and unavoidable; that it is only evil in the view of limited and imperfect beings, and as they are the voluntary, though subordinate, agents of producing it; and that, as it gradually diminishes, it will ultimately terminate in the establishment of the greatest possible sum of virtue and happiness.

It may be said, that the existence and agency of such a being is supported by the language of scripture; that if this notion appear to be founded on such authority, we are bound to adopt it; and that our ideas must be regulated by those views, which Jesus and his apostles have given of the character, dominion, and influence of this powerful and mischievous being. But admitting that these passages, which it may be useful to examine, and which I shall attempt in the sequel of this essay; admitting that these passages were more numerous, and that the Jews adopted the notion of the agency of such a being, the existence of such a powerful enemy of God and virtue is by no means a necessary consequence. The absurdities, which were adopted by the Jews, from the idolatrous and superstitious systems of religion which prevailed among the nations by whom they were led captive, or which were introduced by their teachers from the pre-

vailing philosophy of the heathen schools, are too glaring to be admitted by the enlightened inquirer of the present day, enjoying all the advantages of christianity, and the important discoveries of the wisest and best of men. It was not the intention of the christian dispensation, to correct *all* the errors into which mankind had fallen, nor perhaps any, which were not immediately connected with the great object for which its illustrious teacher was sent into the world; and, least of all, those which must necessarily give place to more enlarged and rational views of the divine perfections and government, such as christianity is calculated to inspire. We are not, therefore, to be surprised, that in the scriptures, the prevalent philosophy as to the motion of the heavenly bodies, the existence and agency of spirits, possession by dæmons, or the more powerful and universal influence of the chief of these, under the character of the devil, is occasionally alluded to, and mentioned by the writers of the christian scriptures, as if in some degree they admitted the truth of ~~these~~ opinions. With regard to some of them it might be the case; but others were too absurd to be retained, even by those who had been early initiated in them, after they had received the illuminations of christianity, and are only referred to as those, which were still adopted by many, and spoken of in language which was then common and popular, as often is the case, after the things signified by the terms are no longer intended by them. Of this kind, I pre-

sume, was the prevalent notion of the agency of the devil.

It is commonly imagined by those, who have not paid particular attention to the subject, that the term *diabolos*, or the English word *devil*, occurs almost in every page of the New Testament. The fact is strictly this : it is used *six* times in the gospel of Matthew ; *not once* by the evangelist Mark ; it is to be found in *six places* in the gospel of Luke ; it occurs only *three times* in the gospel of John ; *twice* in the history of the Acts of the Apostles ; *twenty-eight times* in all the epistles of Paul, which are thirteen in number ; *once* in the epistle to the Hebrews ; *once* in that of James ; *once* in the first epistle of Peter ; *four times* in the first epistle of John ; *once* in Jude ; and *five times* in the book of Revelations ; in all *thirty-eight times* in the volume of the New Testament.

It will evidently appear, that, even in these passages, the word is not always used in the same sense, nor uniformly applied to the same being ; but, without further preface, I shall detail these passages in the order in which they stand, and, at the close of the discussion, I shall arrange them under the respective classes, to which they are appropriated by the evident sense of the word in its connection. It will then more clearly appear, what were the sentiments of the New Testament writers upon this subject.

The first place in which the word *diabolos* occurs in the New Testament is Matt. iv, where

it is used four times in speaking of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness (ver. 1, 5, 8, 11), and particularly ver. 1, it is said, that Jesus was led thither, *to be tempted of the devil*. It may be necessary to attend particularly to this instance, as it appears not only to support the notion of the actual existence of such an evil being, but his agency and influence, even over the mind of Jesus. It is however to be observed that the words are, "then was Jesus led up of *the spirit*," which a very able writer (Farmer) contends, in this connection, invariably means the *spirit of God*, or that divine impulse, by which the Jewish prophets were guided; which he proves by comparing this with various passages of the same import in the Old and New Testaments. It is reasonable to suppose, that the scene, which is here described by this evangelist, and also by Luke, passed in vision, and was intended for the instruction and admonition of Jesus. It cannot be supposed, that the devil, if he be the author of sin, had any such benevolent intention; nor can it be imagined, that Jesus was led by the spirit of God, to be exposed to the agency of this potent enemy; for that would be to admit, that the spirit of God was made the minister and agent of the devil.

Without entering minutely into the object of this vision, if such it were, it evidently contains this general important admonition, that Jesus was in no instance to wish to make use of that power which would accompany him, for his own personal gratification, or for any purpose not connected

with the object of his ministry. As the scenes of this vision passed before his mind, they would make the same impression which those in real life do, and which furnish us with motives to virtue or to vice; and, as far as they seemed to induce him to make an improper use of his miraculous power, they would appear to Jesus to be temptations to *evil*, and would be described by him or by his historians as suggestions of the *devil*. If the more popular interpretation of this part of the evangelical history be adopted, and it be supposed, that these suggestions occurred to the mind of Jesus, by the instigation of the devil, at different times, when he was actually in the situations described by the writer, it can only be concluded from these passages, that the Jews believed in the existence and agency of the devil; and, it may be contended, that they do not actually prove the existence of such a malevolent spirit, any more than the phrase “possessed of demons,” which occurs much more frequently in the New Testament, demonstrates, that, in our Saviour’s time, men were actually possessed by the spirits of deceased wicked men, which inflicted those dreadful disorders, from which they were relieved by the benevolent interposition of Jesus.

The next passage in which the word *diabolos* occurs is in the parable of the tares and the wheat, in the exposition of which Jesus says, Matt. xiii, 39, “The enemy that sowed them (*the tares*) is the devil.” In this connection it may be justly doubted, whether Jesus means positively to assert the

existence of the devil, and his ascendancy over the human mind. It is far more probable, that he uses the phrase in conformity to the prevailing notions of his countrymen. From a parable nothing can be conclusively inferred, but the doctrine or instruction which it is intended to inculcate; the circumstances are to be overlooked, and every thing which is collateral is to be considered only as the ornament of the allegory. In the present instance, it was not the design of Jesus to correct the unphilosophical notions of the Jews concerning the origin or principle of evil, but to repress the precipitate zeal of those, who wished immediately to separate the tares from the wheat; and, in the explanation of the parable, it was not his intention to support a belief of the existence of an evil being, having access to the minds of men, opposing himself, and often successfully, to their virtuous desires and endeavours, and leading them irresistibly into the paths of vice and misery; but to teach his disciples, that the end of the age, or the period of final judgment, was the only proper time of separating the produce of the good seed from that of the bad, and that, as the appointed judge, he would then commission proper instruments to effect this necessary work. Most probably, indeed, the thoughts of Jesus were not extended beyond the awful period of his coming in the fulfilment of his prediction, relative to the capture and destruction of Jerusalem.

The only remaining passage in the gospel of Matt. in which the word *diabolos* occurs, is ch. xxv,

41. Jesus is speaking of the final judgment, and of the sentence which will be pronounced upon the wicked. “Then shall *the king* say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” It is unquestionable, that the Jews believed in the existence of an evil being, at the head of many others, who were supposed to have rebelled against the great Supreme, to have been excluded from his presence, from the happiness which they originally possessed, and who were consigned with the instigator of their rebellion to a place of suffering and torment. But it is evident that this opinion was held by them in common with many other nations, and probably was borrowed from the Egyptians, who adopted it to account for the existence of evil in the world. It by no means follows from the use of this term in the N. T., nor from any allusions to such an opinion, that it is better founded than other absurd and unphilosophical opinions, which the Jews derived from the heathens. Certain it is that this passage does not ascribe to the devil any agency over the human mind.

It has already been noticed that the word does not once occur in the gospel of Mark; our attention must therefore be transferred to the gospel of Luke. The term occurs *five* times in ch. iv, 2, 3, 5, 6, 13; but it is unnecessary to make any observations upon these passages, as they correspond with Matthew’s account of our Lord’s temptation. The word is used only once more in the gospel of Luke, ch. viii, 12. In the exposition of the parable of

the sower, the devil is said to take the word out of the hearts of those by the way-side, lest they should believe and be saved. If the observations which have been made upon the nature of a parable be well founded, this passage will not afford any solid foundation for the belief of the existence and agency of such a being. It only assumes, that such an opinion was admitted by the Jews.

We must now advance to the gospel of John, ch. vi, 70. Jesus answered, ‘Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is *a devil*?’ We are so much accustomed to consider every thing sacred, which relates to the N. T., that sometimes we are not aware of the improprieties which occur in the English translation. On due consideration it will be allowed, that, in this instance, the language of this translation is very improper to be put into the mouth of Jesus, ‘who was meek and lowly of heart, who when he was reviled, reviled not again,’ and who cannot be supposed to have made use of words, which would shock a cultivated mind, even from the lips of the ignorant and prophane : ‘one of you is a devil!’ It is only justice to the evangelist to observe, that the primary meaning of the word translated *devil* is *calumniator, accuser*, which is also the meaning of the corresponding term Satan. Mr. Wakefield has therefore properly translated this verse, ‘Did not I chuse you, *the twelve*, for myself, but one of you is an *accuser** :’ it is added, “He meant Judas Iscariot, one of the

* See also the New Version, *a false accuser*.

twelve who was going to deliver him up." This passage therefore cannot be adduced as affording any support to the commonly received opinion of the existence and agency of an invisible and powerful evil being.

The next instance in which the word occurs is John viii, 44, which is supposed to be more directly in point. It is the reply which Jesus made to those who sought his life. 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him; when he speaketh of a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.' Such is the influence of association, and of long established habits of thinking, that it will not be easy to suggest any interpretation of this passage, different from the common one, which will not appear to many very harsh and unsupported. It may, however, be observed that the Jews, with whom Jesus held this conversation, prided themselves on being the descendants of Abraham; to which Jesus replied, that 'if they were Abraham's children,' i. e. the true children of the patriarch in character and disposition, 'they would do the works of Abraham;' but knowing their evil designs he adds, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do, who was *a murderer from the beginning.*' These words naturally direct our ~~thoughts~~ to Cain, and it is not improbable that ~~the meaning~~ of Jesus may be thus expressed: 'Ye ~~have no~~ just pretensions to the character of faithful Abraham, nor do

ye sustain any relation to him ; but are rather of the kindred and offspring of Cain, that calumniator and murderer, inasmuch as ye seek to kill me, a man who hath told you the truth ; this did not Abraham.' But if this allusion be not admitted, Jesus must only be supposed to refer to the commonly received opinion of the origin of evil designs and wicked practices. In the language of his reproaches, and of his accusations against those, who were seeking his life, we are not to look for his authorized instructions upon a subject incidentally introduced.—The third and last place in which the word is to be found in the gospel of John, is ch. xiii, 2, which seems expressly to support the opinion of those, who maintain the existence of such a being as the devil, and that he hath access to the human mind. The words are these : ' And supper being ended, *the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,* Jesus knowing,' &c. It is to be observed that the words in italics interrupt the connection, and should be included in a parenthesis. They might be omitted without any injury to the sense. The text would then read as follows : ' And supper being ended, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, he riseth from supper,' &c. It is not improbable, that the passage in question was officiously inserted by some transcriber of the authentic gospel ; first as a marginal note, and afterwards incorporated with the text, of which other instances might be adduced. There seems to be

no reason for the observation, that the devil had put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus, when the evangelist is relating an interesting fact, which had no peculiar connection with Judas, and therefore would lead to no association of thought with the character of the apostate. The place for such an observation appears to be more proper and natural in a subsequent part of the narrative, when Jesus declared that one of the twelve should betray him, and in this connection a similar observation occurs, ver. 27. ‘ And after the sop Satan entered into him (Judas);’ an expression as much open to objection as the former, and as likely to have been the marginal gloss of some transcriber. But if the genuineness of both passages be supposed unquestionable, as they are found in all the MSS. now extant, they are certainly the only passages which have yet occurred, which directly assert the agency of the devil over the human mind; and the weight to be ascribed to them will be more justly estimated, when the general sense of the N. T. upon this subject is fully ascertained.

J. W.

INCONSISTENCY
OF
SEVERAL PASSAGES
IN
DOCTOR WATTS'S HYMNS

With Scripture and with each other.

IN the preface to his “Hymns and Spiritual Songs,” this truly pious and excellent person declares, that he has “avoided the more obscure and controverted points of christianity, that we might all obey the direction of the word of God, and sing his praises with understanding. The contentions and distinguishing words of sects and parties are excluded, that whole assemblies might assist at the harmony, and different churches join in the same worship without offence.”

It would seem, therefore, that the doctor did not, at the time he wrote, reckon the doctrines of the trinity, of the double nature of Christ, and of the atonement, among the “obscure and controverted points of christianity.” They were, to his understanding, as perfectly clear and comprehensible, as if no controversy respecting their truth existed; for they are to be found, in one shape or other, in almost every page of this work; but, there is reason to believe, that he did not always continue of opinion that no offence could be taken at the manner in which it had been executed,

The late Mr. Henry Grove remarked to Dr. Watts, that several of his hymns laid the stress of our redemption on the compassion of Christ rather than on the love of God, and expressed his wish that he would alter them. The doctor answered that he should be glad to do it, but that it was out of his power ; for, he had parted with the copy, and the bookseller would not suffer any alteration. *Life of Watts, Boston edition, p. 32.*

In the year 1738, the Rev. Martin Tomkins having expressed his disapprobation of the doxologies introduced by Dr. Watts, in a letter to the doctor, the latter made about twenty remarks on the margin of Mr. T.'s letter ; that relative to the doxologies is as follows : “ I freely answer, I wish some things were corrected ; but the question with me is this : as I wrote them in sincerity at that time, is it not more for the edification of christians and the glory of God to let them stand, than to ruin the usefulness of the whole book by correcting them now, and perhaps bring farther and false suspicions on my *present* opinions ? Besides, I might tell you, that of all the books I have written, that particular copy is not mine. I sold it for a trifle to Mr. Lawrence, near thirty years ago, and his posterity make money of it to this day ; and I can scarce claim a right to make any alteration in the book which would injure the sale of it.” *Ibid.*

That the doctor had it not in his power to make alterations in a book the copy of which he had sold, cannot be denied. But for the sake of

the memory of so good a man, it is to be regretted that he did not publish to the world, on what points and to what extent his sentiments had undergone a change. Whatever he saw to be wrong, he could not consistently believe it would be for the glory of God and the edification of christians to suffer to continue uncorrected. This necessary avowal not having been made, the book comes down to posterity as the record of its author's genuine and unaltered opinions; and, as such, open to the most critical examination. Or if, through tenderness for that timidity which made him shrink at the apprehension of censure from the rigidly orthodox, we should relax a little of the strictness of such a construction, still there is not, perhaps, one of a thousand who make use of the hymns, that is acquainted with the circumstances above mentioned, or that would not deprecate the least alteration, with as much earnestness as Dr. Watts's bookseller. For such chiefly are the following strictures intended. It may be of use to them to bring together in one view the palpable contradictions of the system they adopt, and thus to appeal to their understandings (if they will admit of such an appeal), whether they contribute to the credit of christianity, or to the honour of the God of truth from whom it proceeded.

If Dr. Watts had been asked "whether he believed in more Gods than one," he would certainly have replied, perhaps with a feeling of in-

dignation at such a question, that he did not*. And so will every one say that professes the religion of Christ. Is it possible, then, that nothing contradictory should be perceived in the following extracts ?

BOOK II, HYMN 51.

Bright King of glory, dreadful God !

Our spirits bow before thy seat ;
To thee we lift an humble thought,
And worship at thine awful feet.

Thy power hath form'd, thy wisdom sways
All nature with a sovereign word ;
And the bright world of stars obeys
The will of their *superior Lord*.

BOOK I, HYMN 2.

Ere the blue heavens were stretch'd abroad,
From everlasting was the word ;
With God he was ; the word was God,
And must divinely be ador'd.

By *his own power* all things were made,
By *him supported* all things stand ;
He is the *whole creation's head*,
And angels fly at his command.

Here then we have, in language too clear and determinate to admit of any misconstruction, *two* creators and governors of the universe, and *two* objects of supreme adoration, in direct hostility to the

* See extracts from his sermons at the end.

fundamental and universally acknowledged principle of all true religion, that there is but one God. But it is supposed, that the text upon which this is a paraphrase will warrant the doctrine that these two distinct beings are nevertheless one. Let us briefly examine the foundation of this opinion.

John i, 1. “ In the beginning was the word.” The apostle here writes, not of the beginning of the world, but of the gospel, agreeably to the sense of the term in other parts of his writings, ch. xv, 27, xvi, 4; 1 John i, 1, ii, 7,; 2 John 5, 6; also Luke i, 2. This will not apply with respect to the “ superior Lord,” the eternal JEHOVAH. There would be no propriety in saying that HE was *in* the beginning who was *before* any thing began; who is himself without beginning of days or end of years. “ The word was with God.” So was Moses in the mount, and for a similar purpose: to receive instructions and supernatural communications, to be furnished for the discharge of the high office to which he was called. “ And the word was *a* God.” So was Moses made unto Pharoah in the power given him to perform miracles; and this inferior sense of the term is authorized not only by various passages of scripture, but by our Lord himself in his debate with the Jews. To contend for the construction usually adopted, that the word was possessed of strict and proper deity, is to make the apostle a polytheist; for, having the moment before said he was *with* God, it was impossible he could, if

really divine, be otherwise than *another* God. Any writer would be treated with just contempt who should talk of a man being *with himself*; and can we suppose that the pen of an inspired evangelist would express what from any other would be absolute nonsense? With respect to the word being the creator of all things, we are referred, in the title of the hymn, to Eph. iii, 9, 10, and Col. i, 16. But the former of these passages will not support our author's position, that all things were made by Christ's *own power*; for it is there said, that "God created all things by Jesus Christ." The words "by Jesus Christ" are, however, wanting in the most authentic manuscripts, and are decidedly rejected by Griesbach, in his Greek Testament, as an interpolation. In the latter of these texts, the *all things* said to be created by Christ, were not the heavens and the earth themselves, but things *in them*; such as thrones, dominions, &c. "And he is before all these things, and by him they subsist." Why? Because "it pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell:" so that here likewise the idea of *original* power in Christ fails. As little can it be doubted, that the *all things made* (or more properly, according to the sense of the original word, *done*) by Christ, were such only as related to the establishment of his religion in the world. As to the *divine adoration* of the word, nothing is said of it here, nor indeed in any other part of the New Testament.

Dr. Watts would no doubt have thought himself injured if any one had called in question his full and sincere assent to those sublime passages in the Old Testament, which declare the absolute supremacy and sole dominion of the Divine Being, and the impossibility that any other should be found like or equal to him, and yet believed it perfectly consistent with such a faith, to utter such such sentiments as the following :

BOOK II, HYMN 51.

Yet there is one of *human frame*,
 Jesus, arrayed in flesh and blood,
 Thinks it no robbery to claim
 A *full equality* with God.

Their glory shines with *equal beams*,
 Their essence is for ever *one* ;
 Though they are known by different names,
 The *Father God* and *God the Son**.

* In his discourse on the “ scale of blessedness,” Dr. Watts has the following remarkable expression :

“ What immense and unknown blessedness belongs to each divine person, to all the sacred three, who are by nature and **unchangeable** necessity so near, so united, so much one, that **the least** moment's separation seems to be infinitely impossible ; and then, we may venture to say, it is not to be conceived ; and the blessedness is conceivable by none but God. *This is a nobler union and a more intense pleasure than the man Christ Jesus knows, or feels, or can conceive, for he is a creature.*”

In these remarks, the mention of the deity of the Holy Ghost is purposely omitted. Confusion is sufficiently con-

To be “ of human frame, and arrayed in flesh and blood,” one would think must of itself create an infinite inferiority to him who is a pure and perfect spirit. The claim of “ full equality” is, no doubt, grounded on Phil. ii, 6. But the true translation of those words is, “ he did not eagerly grasp at a resemblance to God,” which it will be instantly perceived gives a sense not only totally different from the common version, but exactly conformable to the strain of the apostle’s argument, which was to recommend humility from the example of Christ. “ Wherefore,” says the context, “ God hath *highly exalted* him.” Exalted whom ? his equal ? no ! that absurd idea is expressly contradicted by our author himself in

BOOK II, HYMN 112.

Great God ! to what a glorious height
Hast *thou advanced* the Lord *thy Son*.

It will be very difficult to establish the unity of essence between the Father and the Son, without admitting the disciples of Christ to a participation of it, as also of their glory, John xvii, 21, 22, 23. “ That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be

founded without this additional ingredient. Let the reader’s imagination supply all that is wanting.

made perfect in one." Expressions which might bear this construction, but certainly were not so intended by the author, we find in

BOOK I, HYMN 54.

Jesus, we bless thy Father's name,
Thy God and ours are both the same.

With Christ our Lord we share our part
In the affections of his heart ;
Nor shall our souls be thence remov'd,
Till he forgets his first belov'd.

Our author says, " they are known by the different names of God the Father and God the Son." It is readily acknowledged that the Supreme Being is known in scripture by the name of God the Father, but no such authority can be produced for calling Jesus " God the Son : " nor can any such title be found there. He was, indeed, in a peculiar sense, the " Son of God : " so are angels ; so was Adam ; so are all his true disciples.

Another solecism arising from the absurd notion of equality presents itself in

BOOK II, HYMN 103.

The Father sent his *equal* Son
To give them life again.

But if the Father and the Son were equal, what reason can be given why one should be *sent* rather than the other ? Among men, the sender is ever, in some respects, superior to the sent.

Moreover, the Son is frequently represented as interceding with the Father to “lay by his fury” and accept of his atonement. But if they are equal in nature and essence, the justice of the Son required an atonement likewise, and it was as necessary to render him placable as the Father. How can this difficulty ever be got over? In fine, if it were possible to prove the equality ever so satisfactorily, unity of essence must be formally abandoned; they can never subsist together; they are totally and eternally incompatible!

While the doctrines of the deity and equality of Christ have been, upon such rational and scriptural grounds, denied, there has been no controversy (unless at a very early period by the Gnostics), respecting his *humanity*. We find it so plainly recorded in his history that he was born, that he was liable to hunger, thirst, and weariness; affected with joy and sorrow, and subject to pain and death; that these circumstances could not easily be doubted or disputed. But it was evident that these attributes of a weak and finite nature were immeasurably distant from, and utterly incompatible with those of a being spiritual, immortal, and eternal; and to reconcile extremes so totally opposite, might well have been thought a difficulty too great to be surmounted. Yet an expedient was found; and it was boldly asserted that Christ possessed *two natures*, the divine and the human, in one person; that these were inseparably united*, and constituted what has been very

* See *Presbyterian Confession of Faith*.

commonly styled a *God-man*. The assertors of this doctrine have not perceived, or have wilfully shut their eyes against the long train of contradictions and impossibilities which it involves. In the first place, it is utterly inconsistent with their own tenet of *equality*; for according to this the Father as well as the Son ought to be possessed of a double nature, a position which they have never ventured to advance. If they allow that there was a difference between the Father and the Son in this respect, such a concession will be fatal to the doctrine of the unity of essence; and if, nevertheless, the unity of essence be maintained, they must fall into the gross absurdity of believing that Christ interceded with himself for the salvation of mankind; that he shed his blood for the satisfaction of his own justice; that he prayed to himself and forsook himself upon the cross; and, in short, that, as the two natures were inseparable in his person, the King eternal and immortal must have expired, and have been shut up in a tomb, leaving, for a considerable space of time, the universe unsustained and unprotected. For

BOOK II, HYMN 43.

Deep in the shades of gloomy death

Th' *Almighty* captive *prisoner* lay.

These, and such like glaring absurdities, seem not to have stood in the way of our author's faith; and he has exhibited them in expressions equally consistent with his principles and shocking to

every dictate of common sense, as well as to every rational idea which the human understanding can form of the divine nature and perfections. The original proposition is thus stated :

BOOK I, HYMN 16.

Hosanna to the royal Son
Of David's ancient line ;
His natures *two*, his person *one*,
Mysterious and divine.

We are also told how He who fills heaven and earth with his presence, withdrew from the former that he might accomplish his purposes in the latter.

BOOK II, HYMN 96.

Must angels sink for ever down,
And burn in quenchless fire,
While God *forsakes* his shining throne
To raise us wretches higher?

The mighty God, who “ made and supports all things by his own power,” a helpless infant on his mother's knees !

BOOK I, HYMN 13.

This infant is the *mighty God*
Come to be *suckled* and *ador'd*.

It might puzzle the profoundest genius to comprize such a mass of unintelligibility, in so small a space as is to be found in

BOOK II, HYMN 136.

The King of glory *sends his Son*
To make his entrance on this earth.

Our souls adore th' *eternal God*
Who condescended *to be born*.

If an *eternal* God could be *born*, it is no wonder that an *immortal* God could be subject to pain, and wounds, and death.

BOOK I, HYMN 130.

Now by the bowels of *my God*,
His sharp *distress*, his sore *complaints*,
By his last *groans*, his dying *blood*—

BOOK II, HYMN 4.

Here at thy cross, my *dying God*,
I lay my soul beneath thy love ;
Beneath the *droppings of thy blood*,
Jesus ! nor shall it e'er remove.

Hosanna to my *dying God*,
And my best honours to his name.

BOOK II, HYMN 9.

Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When *God* the mighty maker *died*
For man the creature's sin.

BOOK II, HYMN 12.

Aaron must lay his robes away,
His mitre and his vest,
When *God himself* comes down to be
The *offering* and the priest.

BOOK II, HYMN 43.

He came t' atone almighty wrath;
Jesus *the God* was born to die.

BOOK II, HYMN 81.

Forgive my guilt, O Prince of Peace,
I'll wound my *God* no more.

From these quotations, and those which immediately follow, it is sufficiently clear, that if the author believed in the unity of essence of the Father and the Son, or in the inseparable junction of the two natures, he must have taken the offended deity and the intercessor for pardon, the person inflicting and the person suffering punishment, to be one and the same. If this should be denied, then is the doctrine of the unity of essence abandoned, and the inseparability confessed to be liable to separation.

BOOK II, HYMN 9.

Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, thine,
And bath'd in its own blood;
While all expos'd to *wrath divine*,
The glorious sufferer stood.

BOOK II, HYMN 12.

Father, he cries, forgive their sins
For I myself have dy'd;
And then he shows his open'd veins
And pleads his wounded side.

BOOK II, HYMN 84.

'Tis Christ the *everlasting God*
And Christ *the man* we sing.

Mountains of *almighty wrath*,
Lay heavy on his soul.

On the important subject of the redemption of man, we find our *evangelical* poet in some instances adopting truly evangelical ideas.

BOOK I, HYMN 100.

Such was the *pity of our God*,
He lov'd the race of men so well,
He sent his Son—

BOOK I, HYMN 137.

'Twas *his own purpose* that begun
To rescue rebels doom'd to die;
He gave us grace in Christ his son
Before he spread the starry sky.

BOOK II, HYMN 69.

Proclaim *salvation from the Lord*
For wretched dying men.

Engrav'd as in eternal brass,
The mighty *promise* shines.

BOOK II, HYMN 104.

Sing how *eternal love*
Its chief beloved chose ;
 And bid him raise our wretched race
 From their abyss of woes.

But although the Almighty,

BOOK II, HYMN 166.

— Knows no shadow of a change
 Nor alters his decrees,

We are given to understand that it was the purpose of the Father to have inflicted the most dreadful punishments upon our disobedient race, but that the compassion of the Son induced him to offer himself a victim to justice in their stead, whereby the sentence and its execution were transferred from the guilty to the innocent.

BOOK II, HYMN 21.

How justice frown'd and vengeance stood
 To drive me down to endless pain ;
 But the great Son propos'd his blood,
 And heavenly *wrath* grew *mild again*.

BOOK II, HYMN 29.

Bless'd be the Lamb, my dearest Lord,
 Who bought me with his blood,
 And quench'd *his Father's flaming sword*
 In his own vital flood.

BOOK II, HYMN 78.

Infinite pity touch'd the heart
Of the eternal Son.

BOOK II, HYMN 108.

Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood
That calm'd his frowning face.

Glory to th' eternal king,
That *lays his fury by.*

BOOK II, HYMN 148.

'Tis by the merits of thy death
The Father *smiles again.*

The justice of God in inflicting sufferings upon
his innocent Son instead of guilty men, is thus celebrated :

BOOK II, HYMN 81.

Was it for crimes that *I had done*
My dearest Lord was slain?
When *Justice* seiz'd God's only Son
And put his soul to pain?

BOOK II, HYMN 83.

Vengeance receiv'd the dread command,
And armed down she flies;
Jesus submits t' his Father's hand,
And bows his head and dies.

BOOK II, HYMN 166.

Justice, upon a dreadful throne,
Maintains the rights of God ;

While *Mercy* sends *her pardons* down,
Bought with a Saviour's blood.

Alas ! for the *Justice* that maintains her rights by inflicting on the innocent the punishment due to the guilty. Alas ! for the *Mercy* that *sells* her pardons for blood ! Horrid doctrine ! that attributes to the All-just and All-merciful the very dispositions by which we should characterize a sanguinary and implacable earthly tyrant !

The tenets of orthodoxy are on no subject more contradictory than on that of personal righteousness. The following may serve as a specimen.

BOOK I, HYMN 45.

The saint that triumphs o'er his sins,
 I'll own him for a son ;
 The whole creation shall *reward*
The conquests he has won.

BOOK I, HYMN 94.

Vain are the hopes the sons of men
 On their own works have built ;
 Their hearts by nature all unclean,
And all their actions guilt.

The scriptural descriptions of our Lord's glorified state are so highly figurative, that it is necessary to suppose human language cannot convey a true idea of it. We should therefore, with a becoming diffidence, confine ourselves to what we find written concerning it. But Dr. Watts's imagination has carried him much farther. He

seems to have provided a throne for each of the persons whom he considers as divine.

BOOK II, HYMN 33.

There on a high majestic throne
Th' Almighty Father reigns.

Bright like a sun the Saviour sits,
And spreads eternal noon.

Amidst those ever-shining skies
Behold the sacred dove.

BOOK II, HYMN 40.

The Lamb that fills the *middle* throne
Shall shed around his milder beams.

BOOK II, HYMN 76.

Our Jesus fills the *middle* seat
Of the celestial throne.

But he seems to expect for him a much higher degree of advancement, and to have included in the idea of his being "appointed heir of all things," a succession to the throne of God the Father himself. So that, instead of the Son giving up all rule, and authority, and power, that God may be all in all, an event of a directly contrary nature may be expected to take place.

BOOK I, HYMN 147.

Bright image of the Father's face,
Shining with undiminish'd rays;

Th' eternal God's eternal Son,
The *heir* and partner of his throne:

The employment assigned to the inhabitants of heaven is also deserving of notice.

BOOK I, HYMN 40.

Now they approach th' almighty throne
With loud hosannas night and day ;
Sweet anthems to the great three-one
Measure their blest eternity.

BOOK II, HYMN 33.

The glorious tenants of the place
Stand bending round the throne ;
And saints and seraphs sing and praise
- The infinite three-one.

Much of this is merely the gratuitous offspring of poetic fancy. It is professedly taken from the book of Revelation ; but the presence of the Holy Ghost in heaven is not there once mentioned, neither any thing of an appropriate seat or throne for it, nor of any worship paid to the *three-one*. In fact, the Holy Spirit has no office whatever *in heaven* ; its operations were only requisite in and confined to *earth*, where the miraculous effects of it were manifested for the purpose of bearing testimony to the messiahship of Jesus ; so that the 7th verse of 1 John v carries the marks of its illegitimacy on its very face.

It gives one pain to see what an excess of labour the worthy doctor has bestowed on what is sometimes called the christian (but more properly,

if it had its true title, the *antichristian* doxology. No precedent is to be found for it in either the Jewish or christian scriptures, nor any such terms or titles as “ God the Son,” “ God the Spirit,” or “ God the Trinity.”

It may be worth while, in conclusion, to take notice of another set of inconsistencies into which Dr. Watts was betrayed, in consequence of his having adopted the commonly received notions concerning the devil, or Satan. He thus describes his original state :

BOOK II, HYMN 24.

High, in the midst of all the throng,
Satan, a tall archangel, sate ;
Amongst the morning stars he sung,
Till sin destroyed his heavenly state.

And thus his present condition :

'Twas sin that hurl'd him from his throne,
Grov'ling in fire the rebel lies.

BOOK II, HYMN 44.

There Satan, the first sinner, *lies*,
And roars, and bites his iron bands ;
In vain the rebel strives to *rise*,
Crush'd with the weight of both thy hands.

BOOK II, HYMN 77.

Eternal chains *confine him down*
To fiery deeps and endless night.

And not only Satan, but his legions are immured in the same prison.

BOOK II, HYMN 89.

His troops rush headlong down to hell,
Like lightning from the skies.

There, *bound in chains*, the lions roar,
And fright the rescued sheep;
But heavy bars *confine* their power
And malice *to the deep*.

Whether the visionary scene described Rev. xii, 7, refer to events already past or yet to come, is by no means clear. Our author, however (with Milton), identifies it with that alluded to 2 Peter ii, 4, and Jude 6, though the issue be materially different.

BOOK I, HYMN 58.

— The wars of Heaven when Michael stood
Chief general of th' eternal King.

Against the dragon and his host
The armies of the Lord prevail.

Down *to the earth* was Satan thrown,
Down *to the earth* his legions fell.

Where, in direct contradiction to what we have just now been told, we find both him and them most actively and mischievously employed, though not always with the same success.

BOOK I, HYMN 97.

Jesus beholds where Satan reigns,
Binding his slaves in heavy chains.

BOOK I, HYMN 98.

The powers of hell agree
To hold our souls in vain.

BOOK II, HYMN 82.

Satan may vent his sharpest spite
And all his legions roar.

BOOK II, HYMN 89.

In vain the baffled prince of hell
His cursed projects tries.

He even, as in Pandemonium, exercises regal
authority.

BOOK II, HYMN 156.

Thus he supports his cruel *throne*
By mischief and deceit.

We are instructed, however, to pray that he
and his hosts may be remanded to that confine-
ment from which (if in fact they ever were there)
they have so unaccountably escaped.

BOOK II, HYMN 90.

Drive the old dragon *from his scat*,
With all his hellish crew.

BOOK II, HYMN 156.

Almighty God, cut short his power,
 Let him in darkness dwell;
 And, that he vex the earth no more,
 Confine him down to hell.

In the 12th sermon of his first volume, Dr. Watts, under the head “ Vth or supreme degree of blessedness,” writes thus: “ Our admiration may be raised yet higher if we make one excursion beyond all created nature, and lift our thoughts upwards to the blessedness of the *three glorious persons in the trinity*. They are inseparably and intimately one with God; they are eternally one God, and therefore eternally blessed. 1 John v, 7: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*; which text *I believe to be authentic and divine*, and that upon just reasons, notwithstanding all the cavils and criticisms that have endeavoured to blot it out of the bible.”

But in a note, a few pages farther on, dated April 8, 1729, he observes: “ This discourse was delivered above twenty years ago; and the reader will observe some warmer efforts of imagination than riper years would indulge on a theme so sublime and abstruse. Since I have searched more studiously into this mystery of late, I have learned more of my own ignorance; so that, when I speak of those *unsearchables*, I abate much of my *younger assurance*; nor do my later thoughts

venture so far into the particular *modes* of explaining this sacred distinction in the godhead. 'There appears to me good reason to doubt whether there can be three distinct and different principles of consciousness, and three distinct and different wills in the one God, the one infinite Spirit. I was afraid to assert it in this sermon heretofore, and I am more afraid to assert it now. Reason and scripture join to teach me that there can be but one God, and this God is a spirit. What distinctions may be in this one spirit, I know not. Yet, since I am fully established in the belief of the *Deity of the blessed Three* (though I know not the *manner* of explication), I dare let this discourse appear now in the world, as being agreeable so far to my present sentiments on the subject. A larger and more particular account of my most mature thoughts on the doctrine of the holy trinity, may be seen in the last sermon of my third volume."

In which sermon he states several propositions ; the first of which is, " God is a spirit, all-wise, and almighty, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and incomprehensible by any creature, the first, the greatest, and the best of beings."

The second proposition asserts, that " There is but one only, the living and the true God. There is but one godhead, one divinity ; for, since God is the first, the greatest, and the best of beings, there can be but one that is the very *first*, the very greatest, and the very best."

After going through the usual arguments to prove what must stand in eternal contradiction to

these fundamental and incontrovertible principles, he concludes,—

“ Upon the whole, it appears that there is, and there must be some real union and communion in godhead, between the sacred three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to answer and support the divine names, titles, and attributes, &c. which are ascribed to them all; and there is, and there must be some sufficient distinction between them to sustain these distinct characters and offices, and to answer to these distinct representations of scripture; though how far this *oneness of godhead*, and this *personal distinction* extends, may not be easy for us to find out exactly, and to describe to the understanding and satisfaction of our fellow-christians. This is that very question which has so much difficulty in it to answer; this has been the hard problem of christianity, in almost all ages, how to reconcile and adjust this article; this has been the solemn labour of our several *schemes* and *hypotheses*, wherein some of us would be glad to arrive at clearer conceptions by a farther search of the holy scriptures. But among the many attempts that have been made to adjust this matter, there is not one that is universally approved.”

And it may be confidently asserted, there never will be! How is it possible to arrive at any certain and satisfactory conclusion, when men assume principles diametrically opposite to, and utterly subversive of each other, and weary themselves in endeavouring to blend them into one uniform and consistent system? From the very nature of the

subject it is reasonable to conclude, that our venerable author's doubts would be still progressive ; and it would have been desirable to ascertain their increase in nine years of farther reflection (from 1729 to 1738). At the former period, however, he had not seen reason to distrust the authenticity of 1 John, v. 7; for he quotes it in his sermon on the trinity, without any intimation to that effect. Hence, perhaps, his perplexity. Could he have known how decisive the evidence was of its being an interpolation, the force of early prejudice might have been broken ; a ray of unclouded light might have beamed upon his mind, and he might have adopted the only safe rule of interpreting the sacred writings, namely, that of adhering to a few primary, simple, and indisputable points of faith, and explaining every thing that wore a doubtful aspect in conformity to them.

Shall we not, then, feel a high degree of gratitude and respect for those, who, having attained a critical knowledge of the languages in which the scriptures were originally written, apply it to the purposes of ascertaining the meaning of doubtful phrases, of detecting the errors of copyists and translators, as well as their unjustifiable intrusions of their own comments as parts of the sacred text, and who have endeavoured to restore it to its original purity, by collating the most ancient and authentic copies ? Is it not of high importance to inquire into the dialectic idioms and popular opinions of the times and countries where the gospel was first published ? For it is impossible that it

should have appeared so inconsistent and self-contradictory to those to whom it first came, as christians of later ages have made it. The terms in which it was delivered to them were, no doubt, perfectly intelligible, although less so to us who live in times and places so very remote. It is our business, therefore, to go beyond the mere letter, and to use every help we can obtain for understanding its true import, particularly by encouraging every well-conducted attempt towards furnishing an accurate translation of it into our own tongue, allowing no more than its due proportion of merit to that commonly received. Our labour will not be without its reward. We shall see that "God is light, and that in him there is no darkness at all." Our faith will be immoveably established, and our joy will proportionably and greatly abound. Amen.

R. E.

THE
WORSHIP AUTHORISED
IN
THE NEW TESTAMENT,
COMPARED WITH THAT
COMMANDED BY MEN.

Directions relative to the object of worship, with specimens of prayers, of devout wishes, &c.

Found in the Christian Scriptures.

Found in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the writings of Presbyterians, &c.

“Thou, when thou prayest, pray to thy FATHER, who is in secret, and thy FATHER, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. After this manner, therefore, pray ye; Our FATHER, who art in heaven.” Matt. vi. 6, 9; Luke xi. 2.

“Jesus saith—the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth, for the FATHER seeketh such to worship HIM.” John iv. 23.

“The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity.”

Athanasian creed.

“Then likewise the minister shall say, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; answer, As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end*.”

Morning service.

* In the reign of *Constantius, Flavianus* of *Antioch* introduced the custom of ascribing glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and in the latter part of the fourth century, *Pope Damasus* is said to have decreed that it should be said or sung at the end of the psalms.

From the Scriptures.

“ I bow my knees unto the **FATHER** of our Lord Jesus Christ, of **WHOM** the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Eph. iii. 14, 15.

“ Giving thanks always, for all things unto **GOD**, and the **FATHER**, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Eph. v. 20. see also ch. ii. 18 ; Rom. xv. 6 ; Col. i. 3, 12 ; iii. 17 ; James iii. 9 ; 1 Pet. i. 17*.

* It is said, Heb. i. 6. “ When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him :” and we read of particular persons worshipping our Lord. But it is well known that by the term *worship* is not always meant *religious adoration*. It is frequently used to describe those marks of respect which are paid to great characters. Some of the persons who are said to have worshipped Jesus were Jews. (Matt. viii. 2. ix. 18). Now the Jews paid *religious* worship to **GOD** only. Indeed, it is not asserted by the generality of those, who believe that Jesus Christ is God, that, at the period when the ruler worshipped or made obeisance to him, the doctrine of his deity was publicly taught. Consequently, that worship had nothing in it of a *religious* nature.

It is said, 1 Chron. xxix. 20. “ All the congregation worshipped the **LORD** and the *king* :” and in Dan. ii. 46. “ That Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation or present, and sweet odours unto him,” as a mark of respect, agreeably to the eastern method of doing persons honour. Jesus, also, speaks of a servant who fell down before his master, and *worshipped* him. Matt. xviii. 26. When, therefore, we read that the *leper worshipped* Jesus—that his disciples, upon his ascension, worshipped him, &c., it is reason-

From the Common Prayer, &c.

“ To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, three in one,
Be honour, praise, and glory given,
By all on earth, and all in heaven.” *Watts’ Doxology.*

“ Above all things, ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world,” &c.

Communion service.

“ It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord ! almighty and everlasting God, who art one God, one Lord ! not *one only person, but three per-*

From the Scriptures.

“ If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for *my Father is GREATER than I.*” John xiv. 28.

“ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O FATHER, Lord of heaven and earth, because THOU hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, FATHER, for so it seemed good in THY sight.” Matt. xi. 25, 26; Luke x. 21.

“ And he—fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O MY FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, *not* as I will, but as THOU wilt.” Matt. xxvi. 39; see also verse 42; Mark xiv. 36; Luke xxii. 42; xxiii. 34, 46; Heb. v. 7.

“ And Jesus lift up his eyes and said, FATHER, I thank thee that THOU hast heard me.” John xi. 41.

“ Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, FATHER, save me from this hour? but for this

From the Common Prayer, &c.

sons, in one substance. For *that* which we believe of the glory of the Father, the *same* we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality.”

Upon the feast of trinity.

“ Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to him alone.”

The Assembly's Confession of Faith, ch. 21.

“ The second part of prayer is adoration, and it contains, (1) A mention of his nature as God; and this includes his most original properties and perfections: his unity of essence, that there is no other God besides him: his inconceivable subsistence in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; which mystery of the trinity is a most proper object of our adoration and wonder, since it so much surpasses our understanding.”

Watts' Guide to Prayer, p. 6.

able to understand the term as meaning nothing more, than that they did him homage as a great character, or as a divine prophet. All their religious addresses were directed to the one God, the Father of Jesus. In Luke xiv. 10. are these words: “ then shalt thou have *worship* in the presence of them that sit at meat.”

Worshipful, and right worshipful, are expressions well known amongst us, as applied to men.

From the Scriptures.

From the Common Prayer, &c.

cause came I unto this hour.
FATHER, glorify thy name." John
xii. 27, 28.

"Holy FATHER, keep through
thine own name, those whom
THOU hast given me." John xvii.
11; see also, verses 1, 3, 5, 21,
24, and 25; Acts iv. 24, &c.

"Blessed be God, even the
FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the FATHER of mercies, and the
GOD of all comfort, who comfort-
eth us in all our tribulation."
2 Cor. i. 3; see also Eph. i. 3.

"Blessed be the GOD and FA-
THER of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who, according to his abundant
mercy, hath begotten us again
unto a lively hope, by the resur-
rection of Jesus Christ from the
dead." 1 Pet. i. 3*.

"According to the will of GOD
and our FATHER, to whom be
glory, for ever and ever." Gal.
i. 4, 5.

"We must give honour to
the three persons in the godhead
distinctly: to the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Henry's Method of Prayer.

"Thou art the King of Glory,
O Christ. Thou art the ever-
lasting Son of the Father. We
therefore pray thee to help thy
servants, whom thou hast re-
deemed with thy most precious
blood.

"Make them to be numbered
with thy saints in glory everlast-
ing."

Te Deum.

"O God the Son, Redeemer of
the world, have mercy upon us
miserable sinners."

"O God the Holy Ghost, pro-
ceeding from the Father and the
Son, have mercy upon us miser-
able sinners."

* We read, Acts vii. 59, that "they stoned Stephen, calling *(upon God*
is not in the original) and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, or breath
of life:" as if he had said, 'accept this sacrifice of my life, which I lay
down for thy sake.' Stephen had just "seen the heavens opened, and the
Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." The impression made by
so grand a spectacle would not quickly wear off. Is it wonderful then,
that he should address this Son of Man? Seeing Jesus in heaven, and
knowing his power with God, John xi. 22, was as good a reason for Ste-
phen to call for and desire his help, as it was for his disciples, who saw
his power on earth, to entreat him to help them in a storm. Matt. viii.
24—27.

From the Scriptures.

"Now unto GOD and our FATHER, be glory for ever and ever*." Phil. iv. 20.

"Now unto the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever." 1 Tim. i. 17; see also Matt. vi. 13; Luke ii. 14; Rom. i. 25; xi. 33, 36; xvi. 25, 27; 2 Cor. xi. 31; Eph. iii. 20, 21; 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15, 16; 1 Pet. v. 10, 11; Jude 24, 25; Rev. iv. 8, 11; vii. 11, 12†.

"In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER *in my name*, he will give it you." John xvi. 23; see also ch. xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16.

From the Common Prayer, &c.

"O holy, blessed, and glorious trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners."

—"Whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood."

—"By the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation; by thy agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial; by thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

"Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us."

"O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, hear us.

* Paul says to Timothy, 1 Tim. i. 12. "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord." But we may express our thankfulness towards any absent friend and benefactor, without directly addressing, much more without worshipping that friend.

† There are in scripture a few ascriptions of praise and glory to the Lord Jesus. 2 Pet. iii. 18; Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 9, 11, 12, 13; vii. 9, 10; but not one, as if he was the great God. Indeed, they are not *addressed* to him, as if he was supposed to be present, except in Revelation v. and vii. where he is represented as being actually before the angels who address him. It should also be observed, that he is there addressed as the *Lamb that was slain*, as a creature capable of dying, which can never be said of the eternal, unchangeable Jehovah. They address him, as a being entirely distinct from God: "Thou wast *slain*, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," ch. v. 9. If he be joined with God in this act of praise, it is no more than David was. "All the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king." 1 Chron. xxix. 20.

From the Scriptures.

"Grace be to you, and peace from GOD our FATHER, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. i. 7.

"Grace, mercy, and peace, from GOD our FATHER, and Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Tim. i. 2.

"Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from GOD the FATHER, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the FATHER, in truth and love." 2 John 3.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from HIM who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven spirits* who are before the throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth†." Rev. i. 4, 5; see also Rom. xvi. 20, 24; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; xiii. 14; Gal. i. 3; vi. 18; Eph. i. 2; vi. 23, 24; Phil. i. 2; iv. 23; Col. i. 2; iv. 18; 1 Thess. i. 1; iii. 11, 12; v. 23, 28; 2 Thess. i. 2; ii. 16, 17;

From the Common Prayer, &c.

Lord have mercy upon us.

Christ have mercy upon us.

Lord have mercy upon us.

From our enemies defend us, O Christ.

O Son of David, have mercy upon us.

Graciously hear us, O Christ.

Graciously hear us, O Lord Christ."

Litany.

"For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

Communion service.

"Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, and our God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, dominion and praise, henceforth and for ever. Amen."

Henry on Prayer.

"—— through Jesus Christ

* This expression shows, that this, and the three preceding passages, should be considered only as *pious wishes*, and not as prayers; for surely the writer would not pray to the seven spirits.

† In Rom. ix. 5. Paul says, "whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; who is over all, God blessed for ever." The same sentiment is expressed in such passages as the following: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. xxviii. 18. "God hath highly exalted him," &c. Phil. ii. 9. 11. "He is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Col. i. 18, 19. "Angels, and authorities.

From the Scriptures.

iii. 5, 16, 18; 2 Tim. i. 2, 18; iv. 22; Titus i. 4; iii. 15; Philem. 3, 25; Heb. xiii. 20, 25; 1 Pet. i. 2; v. 10, 14; 2 Pet. i. 2; Jude 2; Rev. xxii. 21.

“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26.

From the Common Prayer, &c.

our Lord: to whom, with thee, O Father, and thine Holy Spirit, be everlasting praises.”

Doddridge.

“Jesus, my God, thy blood alone Hath power sufficient to atone.”

Watts' Ps. li. 2d part, verse 6.

See also Ps. xix. long metre, verses 5, 6; Ps. xlv.; xcvi. 2d part, long metre; cx; cxviii. &c.

“God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you.”

Matrimony.

THOUGHTS

ON

ORIGINAL SIN,

AND THE

REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW OF GOD.

THE doctrine of original sin assumes as its fundamental principle, the total and universal depravity of human nature. The Assembly's Catechism affirms, “That the sinfulness of that estate into

and powers, being made subject unto him.” 1 Pet. iii. 22; see also, John xvii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 24—28; Eph. i. 20—Heb. i. 9.

It must always be remembered, that “the head of Christ is God. 1 Cor. xi. 3.

which man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil, and that continually ;" and that " this brought upon mankind the displeasure and curse of God, and made them justly liable to all punishments in this world and that which is to come."

That human nature is perfect, no man in his senses will assert. It is certain, that " there is not a just man upon earth, that liveth and sinneth not." " If we should say we have no sin, we should deceive ourselves, and the truth would not be in us." From whatever cause it originally sprung, it is but too apparent, that there is in mankind a prevailing disposition to deviate from that law of their Maker, a sense of which he hath either implanted in their nature, or given them by particular revelation ; and at some periods, this defection hath been almost universal: Indeed, from the very nature of the discoveries he hath made to us of himself, we cannot but draw the conclusion, that we are creatures who stand in need of his mercy, and have reason to fear his displeasure ; nor can any of us be so little acquainted with his own heart, as not to know, that in many things he offends and comes short of the glory of God, of the requirements of his perfect law. But can it be said, with literal truth, that we are *utterly* indisposed, and made opposite to all good, and *wholly* inclined to all evil, and that *continually*?"

Is there no *difference* in the natural dispositions of men? Are virtue and righteousness *wholly* strangers in the earth? Were it so, what idea has ever been formed of the infernal regions which this world would not realize? But it is not the fact. There *are* such things as love to God, and love to man. Honour, honesty, social and personal virtues have a *real existence* among us; otherwise all the ties that bind us together, would be totally dissolved, or, to speak more properly, never could have subsisted. To what purpose would be all the ordinances of religion and means of improvement? The gospel itself is a mockery, if it enjoins us to labour after that which we can never attain, or which, if attained, is of no value, for we know it is of the essence of the *evangelical* doctrine (as it is called), to vilify and degrade ourselves, and to speak of all righteousness of our own in the most contemptuous and even disgusting terms. But no method more direct can be taken to make mankind really as bad as this system supposes them, than to entertain such mean ideas of ourselves and others; for, certainly, we are very unlikely to feel any inclination to acquire that of which we previously think ourselves incapable.

If it be said,—“Is not the law of God perfect? If it be a *law*, must it not be obeyed? And if it be not obeyed, must not the failure be punishable?” It is answered,—The law of God is indeed perfect, otherwise it would not be *his* law who is all perfection. But the point to be considered is, whether its subjects are capable of *perfect* conformity to it.

If our first progenitor had this capacity and disobeyed, he justly incurred the penalty denounced, which was *death* ; and from him nothing exempt from peccability and death could naturally proceed. It was then for the divine wisdom to determine whether the whole race should be discontinued, or propagated under the imperfect and mortal nature to which the first transgression had made them liable. We know that the latter was the case, and although we do not know all the reasons for it, must believe that it was for the wisest and most benevolent purposes. Such then the law of God, *by his own decree*, finds us ; and the question now is, not whether we can obey it *perfectly*, but **HOW FAR** we can obey it. He has so constituted us that some are able to make much higher attainments than others. Can it then be consistent with justice to require that all should reach the same standard ? or to punish them if they do not ? Or, rather, will he not accept sincere endeavours, according to the measure of the qualifications he has bestowed ? Let us endeavour to illustrate this argument by a familiar case. Suppose a person, a complete master of the art of writing, to have a number of pupils, of different ages and abilities, under his instruction. The pieces he sets before them to copy from, are, of course, without the least imperfection. Only one, perhaps, out of many, can attain to an exact imitation. But are those who cannot, after using all the diligence and attention their capacities admit of, reprobated as not only unworthy of commendation, but obnoxious to punishment ? Or are

not their humbler attainments of real value, and estimated and rewarded accordingly? It is *negligence* and *disobedience* only that are thought deserving of chastisement; and so will it be under the government of our Almighty ruler*.

If this view of the subject be correct, and if we can properly consider death as the *punishment* of sin only to the first transgressor, and as no more than the *natural consequence* of his offence to his posterity, it will relieve us from much perplexity in assigning the reason why infants, and such as could not possibly have offended in their own persons, are subjected to pain and mortality. We shall, without reluctance, discard opinions which militate against every proper idea we can form of the equity, the love and mercy of the Supreme Being, as charging him with *punishing* us for being what he himself hath made us. It will not be difficult to conceive, that his permitting the continuance of a race of imperfect and mortal creatures, may be the means of multiplying the subjects of final happiness, and thus of answering the great end of all his dispensations as to this world, the bringing good out of apparent evil, and we shall be enabled to give a rational interpretation to those passages, “hard to be understood,” in the epistle of Paul to the Romans, which speak of sin reigning unto death, &c.

* It will easily be perceived, that this state of the case is exactly conformable to our Lord's representation in the parable of the *Talents*, with which the opposite scheme is totally inconsistent.

It is astonishing, that so much stress is laid on that text, Gal. iii. 10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," as a proof, that every failure in perfect obedience incurs the wrath of the Almighty ; when the whole context shows that the apostle made this quotation from the Pentateuch, in order to deter the Galatians from abandoning the liberty with which Christ had made them free, and returning under the burdensome yoke of the ceremonial law. No, surely ; the God whom we serve is not such a hard master, as to expect to reap where he hath not sown, or to gather where he hath not strewed. Our compassionate Father, who is love itself, will not falsify his own offers of mercy, by insisting upon a full equivalent for every thing in which we may involuntarily fall short ; far less will he take vengeance for our defects, by pouring out the vials of his wrath on the head of another, who is perfectly innocent. His law, if framed on such principles, would be such as no human government ever knew, or, if known, by the common consent of mankind would be held in detestation. The orthodox doctrine has been said to do equal honour to the *justice* and the *mercy* of God. With *justice*, which ought to be only another term for *equity*, such proceedings can have nothing to do ; and where full satisfaction is insisted upon and received, *mercy* is laid out of the question. But, on the contrary, we have God's own authority, for believing that MERCY is his darling attribute, and judgment (or punishment) his *strange*

work ; his goodness is his glory ; his name, proclaimed by himself, is “ the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Each of these particulars might afford matter for delightful meditation. Behold ! how he expatiates, and even seems to dwell upon the pleasing theme, as if the language of mortals were scarcely sufficient to convey adequate ideas of the extent of his mercy. He is not only *willing* to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, when actually committed, but he has mercy *in reserve* ; he lays it by in store, to be ready against the time of need ; and for *thousands*—for indefinite numbers (not for a chosen few), of his frail, erring creatures. In Psalm ciii, the bold and lofty figures of oriental language are employed in the representation : “ As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him. Nay, to *hope* in his mercy, is the way to recommend ourselves to his favour. Psalm cxlvi. 11. “ The Lord *taketh pleasure* in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” But the passages of scripture to this effect are too numerous to be quoted. There is one in the gospel, however, of a nature so attractive, that it is impossible to let it pass without notice. It is the parable of the prodigal son. One would imagine our Lord had taken for the ground-work of it those

verses in Psalm ciii, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth their frame, he remembereth that they are dust." Here he represents God (as indeed he always does) as standing to mankind in that relation, which all who have borne it know to be attended with the strongest emotions of tenderness. The wretched prodigal, experiencing the consequences of his folly (consequences which the laws of God's moral government have established, in order to awaken sinners to a sense of their condition), thinks of returning to his father's house, and frames a most humble and penitential address, to be made on presenting himself before that parent, whose favours he justly conceives that he has for ever forfeited. "Father! I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." But how is the father employed in the mean time? He is persuaded that the evils his unthinking son had brought upon himself, must have roused him to serious thought and reflection. He anxiously expects, and looks out for his return. He catches the first glimpse of him; his bowels yearn with compassion; he cannot wait for his nearer approach, but flies to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him; and all this, before the poor penitent can utter a word of the humble confession he has prepared. When begun, he stays not to hear it out, but interrupts him with orders to his servants, to array him in apparel befitting him as his son, and to prepare a joyful feast,

in celebration of the happy return of him “ who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found.”

Such is the portrait, drawn by a master's hand, of the boundless compassions of our heavenly Father. It presents, indeed, a strong contrast with the Calvinistic doctrine. *There* we have an avenging Deity, ready to devote a whole race to eternal torments, for the fault of one, and in which it is impossible in the nature of things that they could have any participation. *Here*, he is *waiting to be gracious* ; and, as he knows his children are liable to err, merely suffers them to taste the bitter fruits of their own misconduct, expecting those of repentance to follow. In the one case, nothing the sinner can do is sufficient to reinstate him in the favour of his Maker ; in the other, even unfinished expressions of penitence are accepted. On the one hand, it is so absolutely impossible to deprecate his anger, that it *must* have its course, and, if it fall not upon an innocent person of infinite merit, it shall consume till it hath utterly destroyed ; or, rather, it shall burn with eternal and inextinguishable fury. On the other, all is tenderness and love, and not the least traces of a vindictive disposition are discoverable. We are exhorted to be “ followers of God ;” in which of these characters shall we imitate him ? We are to be “ merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful ;” shall it be according to the representations of the Saviour of the world, or of the unrelenting persecutor of Michael Servetus ?

ON THE ALLEDGED
UNIVERSAL DEPRAVITY
 OF
Human Nature.

Every one of them is gone back ; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.—Psalm liii. 3.

THE variety, and even opposition of sentiment contained in the 1st, 53d, and 112th psalms ought to operate as a caution against citing select and detached portions of scripture, and, without a proper regard to the connection in which they stand, making them authority for doctrines inconsistent with the general sense of revelation, and contrary to common observation and experience.

Such an use has been made of certain parts of the 14th and 53d psalms, which are almost *verbatim* alike. From them it has been inferred, that human nature is utterly depraved—that it is a soil in which nothing grows but the rankest and foulest weeds—and that, if any thing better be produced, it is by the immediate and supernatural influence of the Deity. Let us consider a little how far such an opinion is really countenanced by the passages referred to.

In the poetical compositions of David there is great inequality. Sometimes he rises to the utmost height of sublimity in the contemplation of

the divine nature and works. At other times he speaks in the character of an inspired prophet ; but often, merely as a man, subject, as his history sufficiently evinces, to many infirmities ; and, when under the irritation produced by enmity and opposition, he expresses himself in a manner which no christian could consistently take for an example. He himself owns (P. cxvi. 11.) that he sometimes “ spake unadvisedly with his lips ;” and, though we should not put that construction on the general sentence of reprobation which he here appears to pass on his species, yet it is well enough known that poets, both ancient and modern, assume and are allowed what is termed a *licence* of expressing themselves in a way somewhat beyond the strict limits of fact. Such, apparently, is the case in the texts under consideration. The particular occasion upon which these psalms, or either of them, were composed, is not referred to ; but it was probably at the beginning of David’s reign, before the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, and while he met with much trouble and opposition from the adherents of the house of Saul, the greater number of whom might be irreligious and atheistical persons. The probability of this conjecture will receive additional weight, if we look into the subjects of the adjoining psalms, as expressed in their titles from the 52d to the 59th. Under a keen sense of the injuries he was sustaining, and in the ardour of poetic composition, he describes all mankind as his bitter enemies, as not having the fear of God before their eyes, and their animosity against himself

and his people such as would lead them, if it were possible, to devour them. But he predicts their confusion and ruin; and anticipates the happiness which Israel in general should enjoy, when their “salvation should come out of Zion,” when he should be settled upon the throne, and when they should be delivered from this painful state of persecution, which he emphatically compares to that of captivity and bondage.

Supposing however that this interpretation be not the true one, nothing is more clear than that David could not mean to apply these terms of degradation to the human race in their unqualified and literal sense; for in these very psalms he represents the persecutors and the persecuted as persons of *opposite* characters. In the 1st psalm he places those of the good and the wicked man in strong points of contrast; and in the 112th largely describes the excellent qualities of the upright.

These pictures must have been drawn from originals; and therefore there can be no colour for the interpretation modernly given to the words “there is none good, no not one,” unless as they are used by Christ in reference to the absolute goodness of God. It is true that Paul cites them in his epistle to the Jews at Rome; but this is only one instance out of a great number, wherein the Gospel was recommended to the acceptance of the Jews by accommodated quotations from their own scriptures; and *here*, expressly with a view of convincing them that, notwithstanding their high opinion of themselves with respect to peculiar pri-

vileges, they had no superiority in point of sanctity above the gentiles, but stood in equal need with them of the grace of the gospel. This kind of phraseology, then, should always receive the sober construction of reason, experience, and the general scope and tenor of revelation. We know indeed but too well that human nature is imperfect; that much vice and wickedness has in all ages been, and still is prevalent in the world. But it is the very design of revelation to rectify this disorder, to encourage righteousness and discountenance iniquity; and in almost every page of it the distinction between these characters and their opposite consequences are strongly pointed out. We are dealt with, although as fallen, yet as rational creatures, capable of being convinced by argument, of using efforts, and availing ourselves of the assistance offered, for our recovery. But to what end is the Gospel sent, if it be true, and is to remain so to the end of the world, that there neither is nor can be one righteous—"no not one?" If its whole design be to tell us that we are utterly vile and depraved; that our best works are odious in the sight of a holy God; that our righteousness is nothing better than *filthy rags**; that, subject to

* It is strange that those who are so fond of using this phrase should have totally overlooked the passage, Rev. xix. 8. where the righteous acts of the saints are represented under the more appropriate figure of FINE LINEN, clean and white! To understand the true application of its opposite, it is only necessary to turn to Isaiah lxiv. 6. and compare that verse with the one immediately preceding.

the wrath and curse of the Almighty, we are unable to do any thing to deliver ourselves till he singles us out for salvation by his electing grace, and that then we are to rely for our acceptance wholly upon the righteousness of another, transferred to us by faith, which faith must also be exclusively his work : if this be all the Gospel does, what greater benefit does it confer than it would be to open the eyes of a blind man that he might see himself immured in a dungeon? Instead of calling us “ to glory and to virtue,” it destroys every incentive to excellence of character. Instead of representing God as worthy to be loved with “ all the heart and soul and strength and mind,” it holds him forth as an object of terror—as arbitrary, capricious, and cruel. Instead of teaching us love to our species and reverence for ourselves, it leads us to look upon both as poor, abject, contemptible beings, hated by their Maker, and of course hateful to each other. And thus it would seem that no real addition having been made to the knowledge, the virtue, and the happiness of mankind, they had with greater advantage been left to the mere light of nature to find out their duty to God, to each other, and to themselves !

ON THE
 SUPPOSED INABILITY OF MAN
 TO DO ANY THING TOWARDS
 HIS OWN SALVATION.

From Eph. Ch. ii.

IN this part of his address to the christian converts at Ephesus, the apostle places in strong contrast, their former condition, under the darkness of heathenism, and their present situation, under the light and glory of the gospel. He describes the former as a disgraceful and abject submission to the tyranny of corrupt desires and passions, and even as a state of death; of absolute insensibility to every thing that was great and excellent. Their character was like that which he pictures in such dark colours, in the beginning of his epistle to the Romans: sinners even against that sense of right and wrong, which God hath implanted in the heart of every rational being; children of disobedience, and therefore children of wrath; or, as he expresses it in the 6th verse of the 5th chapter of this epistle, “because of these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience:” and again, to the Colossians, “for which things’ sake, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.” He then magnifies the

grace of God in the gospel ; his rich, abundant, overflowing mercy, which called them, as it were, from death to life, from wallowing in the filth of sin, to a state of purity, dignity, and glory. He seems to labour to find words adequately to express this astonishing condescension (v. 6, 7.), reminding them, as it was most proper to do, that it was not for any desert of their own that this grace was manifested towards them ; not for any thing they had previously done to merit such an interposition, or, as he expresses it in his epistle to Titus, “ not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us.” He then tells them, that there was no difference with respect to privileges between them and the formerly-chosen people of the Jews ; they were partakers of the same grace, and all were “ one in Christ Jesus” (v. 13. to 18.). In conclusion, he congratulates them upon this their happy privileged state, and goes on, through the remainder of this most excellent address, to enforce a sense of it still more strongly on their minds, and to urge them by every affecting consideration to a life and conduct corresponding with their high and holy calling.

With a strange perversity of interpretation have these strongly figurative terms, in which the apostle described the sad moral state of the gentile world at the time of the promulgation of christianity, been applied to the actual state of all mankind, in every past, present, and future age. *All* are said to be dead in trespasses and sins, and to have no more power to exert any of the faculties of spiritual

life, than a dead body has to move or breathe. Undoubtedly, we owe all we are and have to the free, unmerited grace and mercy of our Creator. It is in him we live and move and have our being ; all our mental and corporeal powers are his gift. But, as God has so graciously given us these powers, it belongs to us to exert them. Of what use are activity of body and strength of mind, if we lie indolent and supine, waiting for them to be put in motion by some external force, supernaturally operating upon and within us ? So it is in our spiritual concerns. We are actually, by the gospel given to us, in that quickened state to which the apostle alludes, and not in darkness or in death. The rich mercy and grace of God has put the means of life and salvation into our hands, and it is ours to improve them. If we do not strive with all our might, and exert ourselves with suitable diligence, to secure the blessings offered us, we are self-destroyers ; our blood shall be upon our own heads, and God will be justified when he condemneth, and clear when he judgeth. On the contrary, if we are merely passive in these matters, it were as absurd and unjust, to make us the objects of displeasure, on that account, as to punish a dead body for not exercising the faculties and powers of a living animal.

We should easily enter into the full meaning, and perceive the beauty and spirit of the apostolic writings, if we kept in view the particular times and circumstances which gave immediate occasion to them. Those times and those circumstances,

are too often confounded with the present, from which they are widely different; and we cannot, without manifest impropriety, apply all that was said to new converts from a state of heathenism, to ourselves, who have from our infancy been instructed in the faith of Christ, and live in times and places where his religion is generally received and acknowledged. At the same time, there is enough in them, that will apply to the moral state of mankind, in every future age of the world, as founded upon those laws, which cannot cease to be in force, so long as a righteous Sovereign of the universe exists, to reward virtue and punish disobedience.

R. E.

THOUGHTS ON HEAVEN

AS A PLACE.

VERY various are the senses in which the term **HEAVEN** is used in the scriptures. In its lowest acceptation, it means that region of the air through which the fowls wing their way. Again, it signifies that part of the atmosphere in which clouds are formed, and whence the rain descends. The stars are called the host of *heaven*: “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” And the *heavens of heavens*, as it is expressed, Ps. cxlviii. 4, may be supposed to carry our ideas beyond the limits of creation, and has accordingly been considered as the

peculiar residence of God, his true palace; the temple of the DIVINE MAJESTY, the sacred mansion of light and joy and glory, and of which, with more of poetic fancy than philosophic truth, the stars have been called the *pavement*. We shall greatly err if we take our notions on these subjects from the literal tenor of scripture expressions. We are not to look into these books for lectures on astronomy, or other branches of natural philosophy. When commonly received opinions on natural appearances did not militate against the faith and worship of the true God and the grand principles of morality, they were with great propriety taken up by revelation just as it found them; and it was left to time and the progress of human science to produce more correct ideas. Gallileo was imprisoned by the inquisition for doctrines and assertions which directly contradicted the express words of scripture, and yet Gallileo was in the right, and the inquisition in the wrong.

With the like limitation we are to understand any thing that is said in the bible concerning the local residence of the Deity. It was entirely conformable to the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation, and the frequent appearances of divine glory in the earlier periods of it, that God should be represented as *dwelling* among the people of Israel, or in this or that particular place; as standing, sitting, walking, flying, looking down, &c. But there are not wanting, in their sacred writings, expressions of grander and more extensive import. Solomon, in his sublime prayer at the dedication of the temple, says,

“ Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee—how much less this house which I have built!” So the psalmist, “ The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s.” And the prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the name of the Most High, “ Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” We shall then do well to dismiss the idea that there is any particular place, either within or without the bounds of the universe, where the Almighty sits upon a throne and holds a splendid court. It is not only unworthy of his nature, but unnecessary to any purpose respecting the happiness of his creatures. Considering his unbounded spirituality, his universal, unlimited presence and agency, and the knowledge of his works and ways, either obtained by actual discovery or warranted by obvious analogy, it seems most rational to believe that there may be as many local heavens as there are habitable worlds; that in any, or in all of them at once, he can manifest his glory so as to communicate the highest degrees of bliss which they are capable of receiving, to the creatures of his power. O what a magnificent, what a transporting view here at once opens upon the mind! how worthy of the infinite perfections of the Almighty! Countless millions of worlds, with all their countless myriads of inhabitants—all happy in the smiles of their Creator—all enjoying the plenitude of felicity, all employed in the contemplation of the divine attributes, continually advancing

in the ~~age~~ of them—perfect in holiness and love—and possessed of IMMORTALITY! Is it not so in *our* world? Well then, let us believe that *here only* natural and moral evil exist; that sin and death are unknown in any part of God's creation except on this little ball of earth. If this be an error, it is at least an innocent one; it does no dishonour to the greatest and best of Beings; it gives to the benevolent feelings of the soul their widest expansion.

The apostles Peter and John speak of new heavens and a new earth when the former constitution of things shall have passed away. The possibility of a vast change in the globe which we inhabit may be inferred from its present appearance. It certainly has, at some former period, been very different from what we now behold. There are all the marks of a prodigious and universal convulsion. The irregular positions of the strata found on digging into its bowels, the vast fissures in its rocks and mountains, and the variety of marine fossils found even at their summits, furnish abundant proofs of this; nay, there is scarcely a stone which we take up from the ground that has not the appearance of a shattered fragment. Another change equally great may await it. It may become that paradise which we have been accustomed to think it would have been, had not sin and death found their way into it—one of those blissful abodes which we have just now ventured to suppose every other world in the universe of an all-powerful and all-benevolent God actually is; and his will may

literally be done on earth as it is in heaven. It will then enjoy the smiles, the immediate communications and glorious presence of the Eternal Father of all.

Here then probably will be the period when the mediatorial office and kingdom of Christ, having answered all the purposes of the divine love in his appointment to it, will be laid down. Yet it is not necessary to suppose that he will retain no pre-eminence among the happy inhabitants of the future world; the contrary will probably be the case, and he will still appear invested with peculiar dignity as the first born among many brethren. "Father! I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me." He will take up his abode among his redeemed, the object of their love, gratitude, and veneration, and receive their joyful and triumphant ascriptions of glory for the great work of their salvation. "The Lamb that is towards the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall lead them to living springs of water, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes." To some most glorious consummation the lofty descriptions of sacred writ evidently direct our views. But human language is inadequate—after all that can be said by the tongue, or written by the pen of inspiration itself, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

R. E.

THE
SALVATION OF SINNERS

BY THE
Free Grace of God:

BEING
AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLODE
THE PROTESTANT, AS WELL AS POPISH, NOTION OF SAL-
VATION BY HUMAN MERIT, AND TO PROMOTE THE PRI-
MITIVE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE SUFFICIENCY OF
DIVINE MERCY FOR ALL WHO ARE PENITENT.

BY RICHARD WRIGHT.

Prove all things. PAUL.

Truth is mighty, and, whatever be its consequences, must always
prevail. SIR WILLIAM JONES.

It is proper to observe, that a considerable part of the original work contains a reply to some strictures on the author's writings, which had appeared in a periodical publication; and which, together with some local and less interesting matter, it has been judged proper to omit.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is long since the writer of the following pages first felt a conviction of the importance of divine truth, and that every thing ought to be sacrificed to the discovery and promotion of it. For years he has felt the persuasion, that unless a man can make up his mind to part with his ease, reputation, friends, worldly advantage, and even life itself, should the cause of truth call for such painful sacrifices, he is not fully qualified to act the part of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He has long been accustomed to encounter obloquy, the loss of valued friends, and many temporal disadvantages, for the sake of a good conscience: still he rejoices in having followed the convictions of his own mind, and is prepared to meet with firmness any reproach or inconvenience to which the publication of this work may subject him. He wishes his readers to be apprized, that, if they adopt and profess the sentiments inculcated by him, they ought to prepare themselves patiently to endure reproach and painful treatment from reputed orthodox christians of the present day.

Those who cannot bear to be suspected of heretical pravity, who have not courage to meet the frowns, and bear the reproaches, of those assuming men who monopolize to themselves the title of orthodox and evangelical, had better at once lay aside the use of reason in matters of religion, that they

may move on in sectarian trammels without any troublesome convictions; for, if they once begin to bring every religious opinion to the scrutiny of reason, it is highly probable they will soon become dissatisfied with some part of their creed, and be suspected by their brethren of heresy: yet they should remember that, so far as they sacrifice their reason to the dogmas of a party, they degrade themselves in the scale of being, and act unworthy the character of sincere lovers of truth, of the followers of Jesus, who sacrificed his life in the cause of truth, in opposition to the reputed orthodoxy of the men of his age. Far more honourable and advantageous will it be found to have truth with reproach, &c. than to slumber on in error, with ignoble ease, amidst the caresses of our religious friends and connections.

THE DESIGN OF THE FOLLOWING WORK.

IN writing and publishing this work the following ends are proposed.

1. To attempt the removal of those dismal shades which were drawn over the all-glorious character of the Father of mercies during the dark ages of superstition, so far as they remain to the present day: in particular that foul stain which the modern notion of atonement fixes upon it, by the supposition that he saves sinners, not of his pure good-

ness and mercy simply, but because he hath been bought off from the execution of his vengeance, by the expiatory sufferings of an innocent person, against whom all the fierceness of his wrath was directed, and who endured the whole weight of his displeasure.

2. To vindicate the justice of God from the calumnious charge of being a principle of revenge, or mere retaliation, a principle in which not the least degree of mercy or compassion is ever to be found.

3. To show that the gospel is not a plan of bargain, contract, sale, and purchase, according to which God bestows every blessing, not of pure love and mercy, but in consideration of an equivalent which he received for it : and that, on the contrary, it is a system of pure grace, or divine favour, flowing from the infinite, and unmerited, love of the Almighty, who bestows salvation and everlasting life as free gifts, by Jesus Christ, without any consideration distinct from his own mercy, but the penitence and submission of the offender.

4. To explode the absurd and dangerous notion that sinners may become righteous without their own personal conformity, in heart and life, to the righteous will of God by the transfer and imputation of Christ's righteousness to them : and to establish the important principle, in morality and religion, that no man can become righteous any further than he attains right dispositions and performs right actions.

5. To show that Christ is not the procuring cause of the favour and mercy of God to sinners; but

the organ by which the divine truth and grace, mind and will are revealed, the medium through which salvation and everlasting life are communicated.

6. To contribute a mite towards a further reformation from the errors of popery, and the errors of protestants founded on popish principles, especially in reference to those false notions which are deemed by many essential doctrines of the gospel.

7. To roll away a stone of reproach from christianity; on which T. Paine, according to his own account, in his Age of Reason, having stumbled in his childhood, fell into mere deism; and which has probably helped to lead many into infidelity.

Such are the objects kept in view throughout the following pages.

*Preliminary Observations on Acceptance
with God.*

Before we enter upon the principal subject discussed in this work, it may be useful to take a general view of the way of acceptance with God, as taught by Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles.

The writings of Moses clearly teach the mercifulness of God: Exo. xxxiv. 6, 7. They represent him as, symbolically, dwelling on the mercy-seat, and as showing mercy unto thousands of generations: chap. xx. vi. They teach that he can rescind his threatenings, without any violation of the rectitude of his character, or infraction of the established rules of his government, or departure from the principles of his holy law; for they state that he did it in several instances in his dealings with his people: Deut. xxxii. 26. Moses taught the Israelites that God accepted them to be his people on the mere ground of his free favour: chap. vii. 7, 8. He also assured them that God would continue to accept, preserve, and bless them, as a peculiar people, on the ground of their obedience: Exo. xix. 5, 6. And that their enjoying the divine favour, and inheriting life, depended on their obedience: Deut. xxx. chap. He further informed them that if, after they had sinned, they repented, returned to the LORD, and became obedient to his voice, he would have compassion on them, and restore them to the

enjoyment of his favour; *For (saith he) the LORD thy God is a merciful God*: chap. iv. 29, 30, 31. He also taught that God would not accept those who continued disobedient; but inflict on them his terrible judgments: chap. xxviii. The Mosaic writings also show that Enoch was translated on account of the superior excellence of his moral character: Gen. v. 24. *for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*: Heb. xi. 5. that Noah found peculiar favour with the LORD, and escaped the destruction which came upon the world of the ungodly, because he was a just man; for God testified, *Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation*: Gen. vi. 8, 9. & vii. 1. that Abram became righteous by believing what God revealed, and by doing what he commanded, that on this ground he inherited the blessing: chap. xxii. 18.

David describes God as forgiving sins on the ground of his mercy, asserts that he will give to his creatures that which their moral state renders most fit for them to receive, and that the LORD recompensed him according to his righteousness, and according to the cleanness of his hands: he supposed nothing but penitence necessary on the part of a sinner in order to his being pardoned, and that moral excellence was the only condition on which the divine favour could be enjoyed. Psal. xxxii. 1. & ciii. 3—8. 2 Sam. xxii. 25, 26, 27. Psalms xv. & xxiv. & cxii. & li. 16, 17.

Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, in the prayer which he uttered in the hearing of the whole

congregation of Israel, 2 Chron. vi. chap. though a considerable part of it relates to God's forgiving the sins of the people, mentions no condition of pardon but penitence and prayer. He speaks of God's acting towards men according to their moral state, even in the article of forgiveness : v. 30. of his rendering to every man according to all his ways. The only condition he mentions, Pro. i. 23. of sinners being made wise and happy, is their turning at God's reproof. He declares that the good man shall be satisfied from himself : chap. xiv. 14. The only condition of obtaining mercy he represents to be confession of sin and amendment : chap. xxviii. 13. In stating the whole of what relates to man, both his duty and happiness, he only mentions the fearing of God and the keeping of his commandments : Ecclesiastes xii. 13.

The Prophet *Isaiah* clearly states the availability of repentance, for the acceptance of sinners with God, without any other consideration but the divine mercy. On condition of their amending their ways and doings, he assured the people that, though their sins were as scarlet, they should be white as snow, though they were red like crimson, they should be as wool : chap. i. 18. *i. e.* that the foulest stains should be washed out on the condition of genuine repentance. He represents God's showing mercy, and pardoning sin, simply on the ground of the sinner's forsaking his evil ways and returning to him : chap. lv. 7. and his looking to, and dwelling with the humble and contrite, *to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the*

heart of the contrite ones: chap lvii. 15. & lxvi. 2. He describes God as saying that he will defer his anger, and spare sinners, not from any consideration distinct from himself, but purely for his own name sake, from a regard to the glory which results to him from the exercise of his mercy: chap. xlviii. 9—11. When describing those who shall be secured from the awful judgments of heaven, he represents their safety as the consequence of the goodness of their moral state. *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: chap xxxiii. 15, 16.* Throughout his prophecies he represents God as acting towards nations and individuals according to their moral state. It was the want of virtuous principles and righteous conduct among the people that he so warmly reproved, not their neglect of sacrifices. This prophet having so clearly expressed himself on the foregoing points, a few detached passages in his writings ought not to be construed in favour of opposite sentiments.

The prophet *Jeremiah* was much employed in calling the Jews to repentance. A prominent feature in his writings is, that without repentance nothing can save a sinful people from destruction; and that, on the ground of his mercy, God will pardon and accept those who are penitent. *Only acknowledge thine iniquity——Return, ye back-*

*sliding children, and I will heal your backslidings — O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved — If ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other Gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever: chap iii. 13,—22. & iv. 14. & vii. 5, 6, 7. Such was the language of this prophet when speaking in the name of *Jehovah*, to a sinful people. He also plainly teaches that God will rescind his threatenings, whenever those against whom they are denounced turn from the evil of their ways: chap. xviii. 7, 8.*

The prophet *Ezekiel* plainly teaches the efficacy of repentance, that it is the only consideration God requires in order to his admitting the sinner to mercy. *If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die: all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore*

the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity ; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him : he hath done that which is lawful and right ; he shall surely live : chap. xviii. 21, 22—27. & xxxiii. 14, 15, 16. From these passages it is evident the prophet had no idea of any consideration being required, in order to a sinner's attaining life, but repentance and obedience. It should be noticed that, though the LORD had threatened the sinner with certain death, he positively declares, that upon his repentance he would rescind the threatening ; and that all his sins should be cancelled upon his return to the paths of virtue.

Daniel, when confessing the sins of his people, and imploring forgiveness of the LORD, mentions no consideration but what ariseth from the character of God : on that ground simply he intreated pardon and acceptance, saying, O LORD, *the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments—O LORD, righteousness belongeth unto thee—To the LORD our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him—We do not present our supplication before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O LORD, hear ; O LORD, forgive ; O LORD, hearken and do ; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God : chap. ix. 4,—7,—9—18, 19.* He did not suppose that God would be moved to pardon sinners, and receive them into

favour, by any foreign consideration; but that he would do it from the mercifulness of his own nature, and for the glory of his own name.

Hosea declared that God desired mercy, and not sacrifice: that he would betroth sinners unto himself in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies: that he would withhold his favour till they acknowledged their offence: that if the people returned to the LORD he would heal them: that, if they sowed to themselves in righteousness, they should reap in mercy; if they sought the LORD he would rain righteousness upon them: chap. ii. 19. & v. 15. & vi. 1—6. & x. 12. From such declarations nothing can be collected but that God acts from his natural placability, and accepts his creatures on the ground of their penitence and obedience.

Joel, when announcing the calamities which were coming on the people for their sins, delivered this message from God. *Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil:* chap. ii. 12, 13. Here no ground of hope is placed before a sinful people, but the mere mercy and grace of God, no method of averting punishment mentioned but repentance and turning to God.

Amos, after describing the manifold sins of the people, informed them that, if they would seek

good and not evil, they should live, and God would be with them. He encouraged them to hope for the divine favour, if they returned to the paths of rectitude; but assured them that all their sacrifices were of no avail so long as they neglected moral purity: chap. v. 14, 15—21, 22. This was making obedience to God the only ground of acceptance with him.

Jonah was deeply impressed with the sentiment that God exerciseth mercy, and withholds the punishment threatened, simply in consideration of the repentance of sinners. It was this deterred him from going to *Nineveh* when first commanded: and the truth of this sentiment was verified in the case of the Ninevites: chap. iv. 2.

Micah shows the inefficacy of sacrifices, and teaches that what God requires of men, in order to their enjoying his favour, is, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him: chap. vi. 6, 7, 8. He declares that God pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression, because he delighteth in mercy: chap. vii. 18.

Zephaniah shows that the only way to escape punishment is by following after righteousness and meekness: chap. ii. 3.

Zechariah represented obedience as the only thing that can render men safe and happy: chap. i. 3, 4. & vii. 9—14. & viii. 16, 17.

All the *prophets* bear witness to the mercifulness of God: they set forth his mercy as the only ground of hope to sinners, and speak of his acting merely from the dictate of his mercy in pardoning

and saving the penitent. Without hesitation, they speak of God's rescinding his threatenings, when the threatened became penitent; not seeming to suppose that for him to do so could be the least violation of his justice. They leave the divine supremacy, his sovereign will, unfettered, and seem to conceive of no end in the threatenings of God but the reformation of the offender; if that end be obtained punishment is averted. Of the efficacy of repentance, as the consideration of pardon, they seem never to have entertained a doubt. The penitent they always encouraged to hope in the divine mercy, and ever exhibited mercy and forgiveness to the rebellious, on the sole condition of their repenting and turning to God, without discovering the least apprehension that he required any thing more in order to his pardoning offenders. That God would not accept any who continued disobedient they constantly affirmed. That he would never fail to accept those who obeyed him, and that obedience is the condition on which his favour is enjoyed, they uniformly asserted. Such was the doctrine of the prophets, such the views they had of God, and of the way in which man is accepted with him.

As the writers of the New Testament were Jews, and received their first rudiments of religious knowledge from the law and the prophets; as they professed to teach none other things, as leading points of doctrine, than what Moses in the law, and the prophets had written; and as they frequently brought the proof of their doctrine from

the Old Testament ; it is reasonable to conclude that, whatever particular forms of expression they might use on certain occasions, they agreed, in all leading points, with the ancient Hebrew writers. Hence we may suppose they would teach the same doctrine respecting the mercifulness of the Deity, the sufficiency of repentance, and obedience to the truth, as conditions of forgiveness and salvation, and the acceptableness of good works, as the prophets had taught before them ; nor ought passages to be detached from their writings, and construed in a light contrary to their avowed principles.

On examination, it will be found that the messengers of God, under the new dispensation of the gospel, taught the same things, respecting the way of acceptance, as all the prophets had done before the coming of the Messiah.

The gospel is undoubtedly a system of divine mercy and grace ; but in this system conditions are certainly comprehended. The conditions are repentance, faith, and obedience. Without a compliance with these conditions sinners cannot be saved. If it appear that Christ and his apostles insisted on no conditions of acceptance, distinct from the divine mercy and grace, but what the creature himself is called to perform, it will follow that no other condition, or consideration, can be necessary, in order to the salvation of men, and their acceptance with God.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, taught the efficacy of repentance : it was the grand theme of his ministry ; he preached the baptism of repent-

ance, for the remission of sins, and insisted on the necessity of real personal righteousness, in order to acceptance with God : Luke iii. 9—14.

Christ himself was a preacher of repentance and righteousness. He made known the love of God to men, published the riches of divine grace, and declared the mercy of God to a guilty world ; but at the same time he insisted that without repentance there can be no salvation : Luke xiii. 3—5. God sent him to bless mankind ; but it was by turning them from their iniquities : Acts iii. 26. He declared that a leading object of his mission was to call sinners to repentance : Mark ii. 17. To deny the efficacy of repentance would be to render the mission of Christ a nullity. In his sermon on the mount he appears altogether in the character of a practical preacher. He taught that to do the will of God, and seek to be like him, is the only way to gain admittance into his kingdom, that the condition of forgiveness is our forgiving others, and that the man who heareth his sayings and doeth them builds on a good foundation ; that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, or we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (See Mat. 5, 6, & 7 chap.) When he upbraided the cities in which most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not, he spoke of their impenitence as the sole cause of their destruction : chap. xi. 20—24. He taught that men will be accepted or rejected according to the use they make of the talents intrusted to their care ; that when brought to judg-

ment, they will be received to glory, or doomed to punishment, according to their works : chap. 25. Throughout his ministry he taught men to expect salvation, and every blessing, on the ground of the love, mercy, and favour of God, solely on the terms of repentance and obedience to the gospel. He accepted those as his nearest relatives who did the will of his heavenly Father : Mark iii. 35. When a young man enquired of him what he must do to inherit eternal life, he directed him to keep the commandments of God : chap. x. 19. He informed the lawyer who tempted him that if he kept the commandments he should live : Luke x. 25—28. He represented God as accepting penitent sinners, on the ground of his free mercy, just as a compassionate father would his offending child when he saw him turn from his folly : Luke 15 chap. He said to his disciples, *if ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them* : John xiii. 17, which implies that happiness can be attained only by obedience. He taught them that they should continue accepted if they continued in his word, and that if they did not they should be rejected : chap. xv. 1—8.

Peter called upon the crucifiers of Jesus to repent and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out : Acts iii. 19. He said to Simon the sorcerer, *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee* : chap. viii. 22. He testified to Cornelius and his friends, *of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every*

nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him : chap. x. 34, 35. This shows that God will always accept the obedient. In his second Epistle (chap. i. 5—11.) he shows that it is by their obedient conduct christians are to make their calling and election sure, and obtain an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

James declares that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world : James i. 27. He asserts that a man is justified by works and not by faith only, and that faith is dead and useless if it be alone : chap. ii. 14—26.

John teaches that God forgives sins on the ground of penitential confession : 1 John i. 9. He cautions christians against being deceived by the supposition that they might be made righteous without personal obedience, and assures them that he who doeth righteousness, and he only, is righteous : chap. iii. 7. He asserts that he who doeth good is of God, and that he who doeth evil hath not seen God : 3 John 11.

Paul declares that the tenor of his preaching was, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xx. 21.): and faith, or believing, in the New Testament, means a practical credence : hence it is evident he maintained the efficacy of repentance, and that men are accepted as they become obedient. He shows that God is no respecter of persons, that he will render to every

man according to his deeds; that if the uncircumcised gentile obeyed him, according to the light of nature, he should no more be excluded from his favour than the circumcised Jew: Rom. 2 chap. He says, *we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. This is evidently teaching that final acceptance will take place on the ground of obedience. The same sentiment appears, Gal. vi. 7, 8. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* As it is in the dispensation which Christ hath introduced and confirmed by his death, at the head of which God hath placed him, that we are brought nigh and accepted; and as we are brought to repent, believe and obey by the gospel, from which we receive all our knowledge of divine grace and salvation; and further, as it is by our becoming like Christ in our temper and conduct that we are approved of God; we are said to be made accepted in him: Eph. i. 6.

This mere glance at what Jesus and his apostles taught, respecting the way of acceptance with God, may be taken as a specimen of what may be found in the New Testament at large. If the whole be carefully examined, it will be found that the divine

placability is uniformly maintained, the infinite love of God to his creatures constantly asserted, his rich grace and free mercy exhibited, as the only ground of hope to sinners, and of everlasting consolation to christians. It will be found that the first teachers of the gospel insisted on the necessity of repentance, faith, and obedience, in order to the attainment of salvation and acceptance with God : ' that they maintained the efficacy of repentance in fitting the sinner for the reception of divine mercy, and that all who obey, according to the light and ability given them, are accepted. Such appears to be the substance of what Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles taught, respecting the way of acceptance with God. If we do but depart from iniquity, cast ourselves upon the divine mercy, obey to the extent of our knowledge and ability, we need not fear that God will reject us ; for HE IS LOVE, and *delighteth in mercy*. His mercy affords refuge for all the miserable, and all the riches of his favour are provided for those who do his will. Christ, because he obeyed him in all things, was declared his beloved, or approved, son, and those who become the most like him, will be most approved of God.

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CHAPTER FIRST.

The doctrine of Satisfaction stated in the words of its defenders, and refuted by the words of scripture.

IT must be of great importance to understand on what ground God will accept sinners, and receive them to the enjoyment of his favour. Important as this point is, christians have long been, and still are, divided in their opinions respecting it: consequently it must be allowed that some wrong notions, concerning the way of salvation, still remain among the professors of the gospel. We ought not hastily to conclude on which side the mistake lies; but to compare, with the utmost candour and diligence, the opinions of christians, of different parties, with what God hath revealed in the sacred writings, that we may clearly understand the path of life for ourselves. To point out what, upon the most careful examination, we think the errors of our christian brethren, with candour and moderation, ought to give no disgust; on the contrary it should excite fresh attention to the gospel, and may lead to the further knowledge of truth. My design in this chapter is to state what I conceive to be a grand mistake among the followers of Jesus, and to exhibit the contrary doctrine in the words of the sacred penmen. But I would first premise three things.

1. We can judge of the sentiments maintained by any class or description of christians only by the language they generally use to express their views of religious truth ; nor can it be contrary to candor and liberality to understand them to mean what their own words, fairly construed, seem naturally to convey : consequently it cannot be unfair to place before the reader the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for the sins of men in the words of its acknowledged advocates.

2. We are not to draw a representation of the opinions of any denomination of christians from the language of a few obscure individuals who may call themselves of that denomination ; but from the writings of their current and esteemed authors. From such authors I propose making extracts, that it may be seen what the doctrine is which this work is intended to expunge. It should be remembered that the doctrine of satisfaction is not confined to one denomination of christians ; but is generally maintained by the great body of those who, in modern times, have taken upon them to monopolize to themselves the title of orthodox and and evangelical : and I undertake to prove that the orthodoxy and evangelism of the New Testament stand opposed to such reputed orthodoxy and evangelism.

3. I totally disavow every thing invidious, all personal reflections, on the good men whose errors I think it my duty to expose. The integrity, zeal, and usefulness of the men I greatly respect ; but, whatever respect we owe to men, we owe none to

their mistakes. A blind veneration for celebrated names has retarded the progress of truth, and perpetuated the influence of the errors of former times. The opinions of the wisest and best of men ought not to be adopted implicitly ; they ought to be brought to the test of scripture and reason, and nothing to be admitted as true but what will bear such a test.

That the reader may perceive the striking contrast which exists between the doctrine of satisfaction, or the popular notion of atonement, and what the oracles of God teach respecting the way of salvation and acceptance with God, he is presented in one column with extracts from reputed orthodox writers, in the other with passages of scripture. He may hence learn that modern christians speak in very different language, of the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, from that used by the prophets, Jesus, and his apostles, when speaking on the same subject.

Extracts from reputed orthodox writers.

LUTHER (in his commentary on Gal. iii. 13.) says: 'Christ is innocent as concerning his own person, and therefore he ought not to have been hanged upon a tree: but because, according to the law of Moses, every thief and malefactor ought to be hanged, therefore Christ also, according to the law, ought to be hanged, for he sustained the

Extracts from the sacred scriptures, with remarks.

Gen. xviii. 23, 25. 'Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?—That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'

Exod. xxiii. 7. 'The innocent and righteous slay thou not.'

person of a sinner and of a thief, not of one, but of all sinners and thieves.'

Again, he says: And this (no doubt) all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in all the world. For he being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins, is not now the Son of God born of the virgin Mary; but a sinner.' Again, he says: 'When the law, therefore, found him among thieves, it condemned and killed him as a thief.' Again, he represents God as saying to Christ: 'Be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men: see, therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them.' Then he adds: 'Here now cometh the law, and saith, I find him a sinner, and that such a one as hath taken upon him the sins of all men, and I see no sins else but in him; therefore let him die upon the cross: and so he setteth upon him and killeth him.'

stances which took place at the time, said, Chap. xxiii. 47. 'Certainly this was a righteous man.'

The apostles testified to the Jews, Acts iii. 14. that they had 'denied the holy one and the just:' and Chap. vii. 52. the martyr Stephen told them that they had been his 'betrayers and murderers.'

God's command to the judges of Israel, Deut. xxv. 1. was that they should 'Justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.'

Job viii. 3. 'Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?' Chap. xxxiv. 12. 'Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.'

Prov. xvii. 15. 'He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.'

Ezek. xviii. 20. 'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.'

Heb. vii. 26. 'Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.'

One of the thieves, who were crucified with Christ, said to his companion, Luke xxiii. 41. speaking of their condemnation: 'We indeed justly: but this man hath done nothing amiss.'

The Roman centurion, when he saw the manner in which Christ suffered, and the circum-

Let the reader judge then whether Jesus died a guilty person and a sinner, as *Luther* has represented; or whether it was possible for him to die by the hand of justice, and at the same time be murdered.

CALVIN, in his Institutions, B. 2. C. 16. § 5. says: 'Now where it is demanded how Christ hath done away our sins, and taken away the strife between us and God, and purchased such righteousness as might *make him avourable and well-willing* towards us: it may be generally answered, that he hath brought it to pass by the whole course of his obedience.' Again, § 10. he hath these words: 'That in his soul he [Christ] suffered the torments of a damned and forsaken man.' Again, C. 15. § 6. he speaks of Christ's bearing the person of a priest: 'To make the Father favourable and merciful unto us.' Of God's 'appeasing himself through the blood of the cross.' § 4. He saith: 'That the burden of damnation, from which we were delivered, was laid upon Christ.' B. 3. C. 4. § 26. 'There is no other satisfaction by which God, being displeased, may be made favourable and appeased.'

'Christ died to reconcile the Father to us, and that he might be a true sacrifice for the guilt not only of original sin, but also for all the actual sins of men.'

Augsburg Confession.

1 John, iv. 16. 'GOD IS LOVE.'

John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.'

Eph. ii. 4, 5. 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace ye are saved.'

2 Cor. v. 18, 19. 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.'

These passages show that nothing ever was necessary to be done to make God well-willing, favourable, and merciful to sinners, as *Calvin* supposed; for it appears that he always was so, without any external inducement.

'When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.' Rom. v. 10.

This passage shows that it was not God, but men, who were reconciled by the death of Christ.

‘God is not only supremely merciful, but supremely just. But his justice requires that our sins, being committed against his infinite majesty, must be punished not only with temporal, but with eternal pains, both of body and mind; which pains we cannot escape till the justice of God be satisfied. But when we could not make satisfaction, God gave his only begotten Son to satisfy for us: and he was made sin and a curse upon the cross in our stead.’

Synod of Dort.

‘We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.—Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine.’

‘The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone.’

Articles of the Church of England.

‘Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and accepting their persons as righteous: not

‘For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.’ Luke xxii. 37.

What was foretold concerning the sufferings of Christ had its accomplishment, and terminated in a few hours: but how could eternal pains, both of body and mind, be endured, and brought to a termination, in the short space of a few hours?

‘Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.’ James ii. 21—24.

‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be im-

for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them.'

'Christ, by his obedience, did fully discharge the debt, of all those who are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf.'

Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland.

FLAVEL, in his *Fountain of Life Opened*, has the following passage. Quarto edit. p. 46. 'To wrath, to the wrath of an infinite God without mixture, to the very torments of hell, was Christ delivered, and that by the hand of his own Father.' P. 119. 'God stood upon full satisfaction, and would not remit one sin without it.' P. 129. 'It was necessary the sacrifice of Christ should be answerable to the debt we owed.' P. 132. 'The design and end of this oblation was to atone, pacify, and reconcile God by giving him a full and adequate compensation or satisfaction for the sins of his elect.' P. 134. 'From this oblation Christ made of himself to God for our sins, we infer the inflexible nature of divine jus-

puted, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' Rom. iv. 3, 23, 24.

'That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.' Chap. viii. 4.

'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'—Chap. x. 10.

'Let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.' 1 John iii. 7.

Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. 'And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin.'

Is this the character of a being who will not remit one sin without full satisfaction? Is this the Father, who, with his own hand, delivered up his most holy and obedient child to the very torments of hell? Surely not; such a conduct would be utterly inconsistent with such a character.

2 Sam. xxii. 26, 27. 'With

tice, which could no other way be diverted from us and appeased, but by the blood of Christ.' P. 155. 'Sparing mercy is the lowest degree of mercy, yet it was denied to Christ: he abated him not a minute of the time appointed for his sufferings, nor one degree of the wrath he had to bear.—Justice will not bend in the least; but, having to do with him on this account, resolves to fetch its pennyworths out of his blood.' P. 164. 'And Chrysostom to the same purpose; Christ paid much more (saith he) than we owed; and so much more as the immense ocean is more than a small drop.'—In the next page he tells us what Christ bought with this over-price. 'All *temporal* good things, all *spiritual* good things, and all *eternal* good things.' P. 327. 'It is as if the Lord had said, Come forth of thy scabbard, O sword of justice! thou hast been hid there a long time, thou hast, as it were, been asleep in thy scabbard; now awake, and glitter; thou shalt drink royal blood; such as thou never sheddest before.' P. 338. 'Here is the triumph of divine justice, and the highest triumph that ever it had; to single forth the chief shepherd—the *man* that is *God's fellow*—and sheath its sword in his breast for satisfac-

the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.'

How can it be true then, that this Being would not show himself in the least merciful towards the merciful Jesus; that with the most upright and pure man that ever lived he would show himself only wrathful and vindictive?

Acts xvii. 25. 'He [God] giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.'

Eph. ii. 8. 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'

Rom. vi. 23. 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

But if all temporal good things, all spiritual good things, and all eternal good things, be freely given by God, how can it be true that Christ bought all these things for us, and paid their full price, and that justice would not suffer us to be saved unless it 'Fetched its pennyworths out of his blood?'

Mal. iii. 6. 'I am the LORD, I change not.'

James i. 17. 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

tion.' P. 419. His soul felt the *wrath of an angry God*, which was terribly impressed upon it. —As the wrath, the pure unmixed wrath of God, lay upon his soul, so *all the wrath of God* was poured out upon him even to the last drop.' P. 417. 'As it was all the wrath of God that lay upon Christ, so *it was his wrath aggravated* in the divers respects, beyond that which the damned themselves do suffer.' In p. 82, he talks of the blood of Christ being 'in itself sufficient to stop the course of God's justice, and render him not only placable, but abundantly satisfied.' And, p. 133. 'Of all the three persons in the divine essence beng reconciled by the expiation of sin.' P. 159. he says: 'If Christ, by dying, hath made full satisfaction, then *God was no loser in pardoning the greatest of sinners that believe in Jesus.*'

Isa. xxvii. 4. 'Fury is not in me.'

Zeph. iii. 17. 'He will rest in his love.'

How is it possible, according to these passages, that the Almighty should become an angry God, and lay his wrath upon an innocent person? How is it possible he should be capable of being appeased and reconciled, seeing these things imply a change, wherever they take place; but no change can be possible in an unchangeable being?

Matt. iii. 17. 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.'

John viii. 9. 'The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.'

If Christ always pleased God, how could he be the object of his displeasure, and have all his wrath directed against him?

ISAAC AMBROSE, in his *Looking unto Jesus*, Edinburgh edit. represents Christ as saying to his Father, p. 308. 'O my Father, sith thou hast bent thy bow, lo here an open breast: fix herein all thy shafts of fury. —Come and shoot here thine arrows of revenge.' Again, he says, p. 313. 'We find God the Father imposing, and Christ submitting to this satisfaction.'

Heb. v. 7. Christ, 'in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.'

Mark xiv. 35, 36. 'And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he

Again, p. 314. 'Not the sins themselves, not the evil in them, or fault of them, but the guilt and penalty belonging to them; this God laid upon his son, and charged it upon him: he charged it as a creditor chargeth the debt upon the surety, requiring satisfaction.' Again, p. 268. he says: 'God the Father is here brought in as drawing and whetting his sword, and calling upon it to do execution against Jesus Christ.—God the Father had a hand in his sufferings.—It was not a naked permission, but a positive decree.—The plot was long since drawn, and lay hid in God's bosom till he was pleased (by the actions of men) to copy it out and to give the world a draught of it.—God spent his eternal thoughts about it.'

said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.'

Thus did Jesus pray; but he did not address his Father as if he thought him angry and vindictive; he dropt no hint of God's venting his fury and revenge upon him.

Phil. ii. 8. Christ 'became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.'

Heb. xii. 2. 'For the joy that was set before him [he] endured the cross, despising the shame.'

Acts ii. 23. 'Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.'

Such is the light in which the death of Christ is represented in the New Testament, not as a plot which God had drawn, and spent his eternal thoughts about, and which was to be copied out by the wicked actions of men; but as the most perfect act of obedience to the divine will, on the part of Christ, in his suffering so unjust and cruel a death without resistance or complaint; and as a most cruel and wicked murder on the part of the Jews.

BAXTER, in his book on Universal Redemption, says, p. 50. 'Christ did give his satisfaction directly and strictly not to man, for whom he suffered, but to God whom he satisfied.' Again, p. 56. 'The rector or creditor must first receive the satisfaction, before a discharge

Luke vii. 41, 42. 'There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.'

Such was our Lord's method of illustrating his doctrine: and

can be offered to the offender or debtor, on consideration of that satisfaction made and accepted.' Again, p. 60. 'Christ's death is a sufficient price and satisfaction to God for the sins of all mankind.' Yet this good man supposed, that though Christ had made satisfaction for *all*, many would suffer everlastingly: for he says, p. 44. 'The consciences of the damned in hell (which will be God's executioners), will everlastingly torment them for refusing that pardon and salvation that was so dearly purchased for them.'

BISHOP BEVERIDGE, in his *Private Thoughts upon Religion*, fifth edit. speaking of the death of Christ, p. 44, says: 'I believe it was not only as much, but infinitely more satisfactory to divine justice, than though I should have died to eternity: for by that means justice is actually and perfectly satisfied already.' In the next page he says: 'I may not only cry, *mercy, mercy, O gracious Father*; but *justice, justice, my righteous God*! I may not only say, Lord, be gracious and merciful, but be just and faithful, to acquit me from that debt, and cancel that bond which my surety hath paid for me.'

In the Practice of Piety, fifty-

certainly it teaches nothing about God's standing on complete satisfaction before a discharge could be offered to the offender.

And he said, Luke vi. 37. 'Forgive and ye shall be forgiven.' And, Matt. vi. 14. 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you.'

But surely we are not to stand upon full satisfaction before we forgive a debt, or trespass.

Lam. iii. 22, 23, 32, 33. 'It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.'

Micah vii. 18. 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.'

Psa. cxlvii. 11. 'The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and those that hope in his mercy.'

ninth edit. p. 405, the sinner is described as asking: 'Lord, why didst thou pray with such strong crying and tears?' And Christ as replying: 'That I might quench the fury of God's justice, which was so fiercely kindled against thee.'

Tit. iii. 5. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.'

From these passages it appears that the ground of a sinner's hope is the mercy of God: and that all the blessings we receive flow from the divine mercy.

BUNYAN, in his book called *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, p. 88, speaking of the favour of God, says: 'That it comes by way of covenant, contract, or bargain.' P. 90. That 'this covenant or bargain was made in deed and in truth, before man was in being.' P. 101. That God and Christ both bound themselves by an oath to fulfil each his part of the agreement. P. 102. That Christ was 'at the bargain making:' and that he engaged on his part 'that there should be a *complete* satisfaction given to God for the sins of the world.' P. 104, he says: 'God's law did so seize upon the Lord Jesus, and so cruelly handle him, and so exact upon him, that it would never let him alone, until it had accused him, and condemned him, executed him, and screwed his very heart's blood out of his precious heart and side.' Again, p. 113. 'When Jesus Christ did come to make himself a sacrifice, or to offer

John i. 17. 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

Acts iv. 33. 'Great grace was upon them all.'

Rom. iii. 24. 'Being justified freely by his grace.'

Chap. iv. 16. 'It is of faith that it might be by grace.'

Chap. v. 2. 'We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.'

Chap. v. 15. 'For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.'

Ver. 17. 'They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.'

Ver. 20. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

1 Cor. xv. 10. 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'

Eph. i. 3, 6, 7. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus-Christ, who hath

himself for sin, you may understand that our sins were indeed charged to purpose upon him.' Again: 'His death was not a natural death, but a cursed death, even such a one as men do undergo from God for their sins (though he himself had none), even such a death, as to endure the very pains and torments of hell.' Again, p. 116. 'The sins for which he suffered, called for the torments of hell; the condition in which he died, did call for the torments of hell; for Christ did not die the death of a saint, but the death of a sinner; of a cursed and damned sinner (because he stood in their rooms); the law to which he was subjected, called for the torments of hell; the nature of God's justice could not bate him any thing, the death which he was to suffer, had not lost its sting: all these being put together, do irresistibly declare unto us, that he, as a sacrifice, did suffer the torments of hell.'

blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his [God's] grace.'

2 Thess. ii. 16. 'God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.'

C. xx. 24. 'The ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'

1 Cor. i. 4. 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.'

Tit. ii. 2. 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.'

2 Cor. ix. 15. 'Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.'

These passages, with many more which might be quoted, show, that all the blessings made known by Christ, and communicated by the gospel, are of the grace of God, i. e. his free favour; than which nothing can be more contrary to the notion of their coming to us by 'way of contract or bargain.' Every idea of God's bargaining to dispense his favours at a certain price, destroys the idea of free grace.

STOCKELL, in his book called 'The Redeemer's Glory Unveiled, says, p. 157, 158. 'In a strict and proper sense, the infinite God doth not *forgive* sin; for it is readily granted by all who are *sound in the faith*, that Jesus Christ hath given full satisfaction to divine justice for all sin, and hath fully paid the debts of his church. And if Christ has satisfied the justice of God, for all the sins of his people, how, then, can it justly, or with propriety of speech, be said, that God pardoneth our sins and transgressions? Sure I am, that debt can never be *forgiven* which is *paid*. For instance: suppose I owe a man a thousand pounds, and he should demand this debt: I must *pay*, or go to jail; my *adversary* is about to *deliver me to the officer*, that I may be *cast into prison*. I acknowledge, that the whole of this proceeding is just; but, in the interim, a third person interposes, who formerly loved me, and demonstrates he still loves me, in engaging to pay my debt: *I love him*, saith he, *he shall not go to jail; I will pay the debt. Here I give my bond for the payment*. Tell me, now, did my creditor *forgive* me my debt? I am certain every wise man will answer in the negative. This, then, is the true state of the case

Mr. Stockell speaks fairly out; he admits the natural consequence of the doctrine of satisfaction, i. e. that it destroys the idea of God's forgiving sins; but that the doctrine of the free forgiveness of sins is plainly taught in the Scriptures may be seen from the following passages.

2 Chron. vii. 14. 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin.'

Psalms xxxii. 1. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.'

lxxxvi. 5. 'For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee.'

ciii. 2, 3. 'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities.'

cxxx. 3, 4. 'If thou LORD shouldest mark iniquities. O LORD who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

Nehem. ix. 17. 'Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.'

Isa. xxxiii. 24. 'The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.'

in hand. Absolute justice was ready to apprehend us, and commit us to the *everlasting prison of darkness* for our iniquities : but our glorious *head and husband*, Jesus Christ, who had *loved us* in our supralapsarian state, as his *bride and spouse*, did, as our husband, lay himself under an obligation to pay our debt ; he became our sponsor or surety, and gave (to speak after the manner of men) a bond for our debt ; for all was placed to his account ; and he did, at the time appointed by the Father, dip his pen in his own *blood*, and *cross the black lines* of all our sins, by which he made to God a full payment of our debt. Tell me, now, were my sins *forgiven* me in a strict and proper sense ? This must also be answered in the negative.'

MR. BRINE, in his answer to *Dr. James Foster*, says, p. 245. 'The blessed Jesus was' our surety, and paid our debt ; his payment is reckoned to us.—Nor is there any thing absurd in this, more than a creditor's imputing to a debtor the payment of a debt by a surety, and thereupon esteeming him no longer a debtor to himself.' Again, speaking of what the Jews did to Christ, he says, p. 332. 'He [God] decreed that those very persons

C. xl. 2. 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.'

C. lv. 7. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

Jer. xxxi. 34. 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

C. xxxiii. 8. 'I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.'

C. xxxvi. 3. 'It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way ; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.'

Dan. ix. 9. 'To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.'

Matt. xii. 31. 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.'

Luke xxiii. 34. 'Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.'

Acts v. 31. 'Him [Christ] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance

should be the actors of this vile tragedy, who acted therein, and not others.'

DR. WATTS, in his hymns and poems, has the following passages :

'How justice frown'd, and vengeance stood, [pain !
To drive me down to endless
But the great son propos'd his blood, [again.'
And heav'nly wrath grew mild

'Well, the redeemer's gone
T' appear before our God,
To sprinkle o'er the flaming throne,
With his atoning blood.'

'Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame ;
Our God appear'd consuming fire,
And vengeance was his name.'

'Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,
That calm'd his frowning face,
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
And turn'd the wrath to grace.'

'Justice was pleas'd to bruise the God, [venly blood.'
And pay its wrongs with hea-

'Is there no shelter from the eye

unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

C. xiii. 38. 'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.'

C. xxvi. 18. 'To open their eyes,—that they may receive forgiveness of sins.'

Rom. iv. 7. 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.'

Col. ii. 13. 'And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.'

1 John i. 9. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.'

C. ii. 12. 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.'

Of a revenging God,
JESUS, to thy dear wounds I
fly,
Bedew me with thy blood.'

' Pardon, and grace, and bound-
less love, [blood,
Streaming along a SAVIOUR's
And life, and joys, and crowns
above, [GOD.'
Dear purchas'd by a bleeding

' Did Pity ever stoop so low,
Dress'd in Divinity and blood?
Was ever rebel courted so,
In groans of an expiring GOD?'

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MR. DAN TAYLOR, in his *Fundamentals of Religion*, first edit. has the following passages: P. 169. ' By atonement is meant, in general, something performed or suffered, or both, in order to appease an offended party.' P. 170. Speaking of God's punishing transgressors, he says: ' If this punishment fall upon us, we are treated in a manner similar to that in which the flaming passion we call wrath would naturally prompt us to treat an offender.' P. 173. After speaking of Christ's dying for us, he asks: ' Is it not evident then, that he died to *atone* or *appease* the divine anger?' P. 175. ' It is well known that a *propitiation* signifies an appeasement of anger in order to expiate offences, and obtain pardon for the offen-

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That God can act on the ground of mercy, without requiring a satisfaction, and that he hath more pleasure in exercising his mercy freely, and in the obedience of his creatures, than in bleeding sacrifices, is evident from the following passages?

1 Sam. xv. 22. ' Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams?'

Psa. li. 16, 17. ' For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'

Isa. i. 11, 16, 17, 18. ' To

der.' It is evident, that Mr. Taylor, in these passages, maintains the same sentiment as others contend for under the name of satisfaction: and as he maintains the universality of the death of Christ, and of his atonement, he must be considered as maintaining that Christ has made satisfaction to divine justice for, or by his death expiated the sins of, all mankind: yet he supposes divine justice will be eternally pursuing those who do not believe and obey in the present state: for he says, p. 343. 'In these torments must the ungodly *for ever* dwell, soul and body eternally filled with anguish. I say *eternally*, for this fire is everlasting. Ages, thousands and millions of ages shall not bring its burning to a period. Millions of ages can bear no comparison to the duration of a lost sinner's anguish. When the largest number of ages to which the thought of man can extend, are revolved, this torment will only be beginning.'

what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.— Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

Hos. vi. 6. 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.'

Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. 'Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mer-

cy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?'

Matt. ix. 13. 'Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.'

Pro. xxviii. 13. 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.'

BISHOP BEVERIDGE, in his sermons, vol. 10. p. 202. speaking of Christ, says, 'And unless he mediate or intercede for us, we may pray our hearts out, all will signify nothing, GOD will neither grant what we desire, nor accept of any thing we do.' Again, p. 244. 'And, verily, it is well for us, that we have such a Mediator and Advocate, who is able to make up all differences, to reconcile Almighty GOD our maker to us, and to prevail with him to accept of any thing that we do.'

'I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you.'—John xvi. 26, 27.

'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.'

'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he who feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.'—Acts x. 4, 34, 35.

'The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.'—Rom. x. 12.

The preceding extracts, from reputed orthodox writers of celebrity, sufficiently explain what is meant by the doctrine of satisfaction, or popular doctrine of atonement; they show the light in which it hath been maintained for several ages: the import of them may be thus summarily stated. 1. Our sins made God angry, wrathful, and vindictive; and, such is the nature of his justice, it was impossible

for him to lay aside his wrath, and become placable, well-willing, favourable, and merciful to his creatures, until an innocent and holy person had borne the whole weight of his indignation and fury, and so satisfied divine justice on their behalf. 2.

That Christ became the substitute of sinners, and, standing in their place, had all their sins imputed to him, and set up to his account; that he became responsible for them, and had the whole weight of their guilt and punishment laid upon him: that, this being the case, the wrath of God was turned from the sinner, and poured out upon Christ: that justice could make no abatement, but exacted of the substitute all that the sinner owed, and inflicted on him the very torments of the damned in hell, to the last degree: that, consequently, Christ became a sinner, by imputation, and died the death, not of a righteous person, but of a sinner. 3. That Christ, by enduring all the wrath of God, hath appeased, reconciled, and rendered him placable, well-willing, favourable, and merciful to sinners. 4. That all the blessings of grace and salvation come to us on the ground of a contract, bargain, or agreement, made between the Father and the Son on behalf of sinners; the conditions of which bargain, or agreement, Christ hath made good, on his part, by suffering the vengeance of God due to the actual transgressors. 5. That, strictly speaking, God does not forgive sins; but cancels them because Christ has made full satisfaction for them; as a creditor cancels a debt when he has received full payment: that the blessings which God bestows on sinners

are not dispensed by him as absolute free gifts ; but that Christ paid a price for them to divine justice.

6. That sinners have not only encouragement to pray for blessings, on the ground of the divine mercy ; but a right to require them, on the ground of justice ; Christ having made good, on their behalf, his part of the bargain, or agreement, which secures all blessings to them. Such is the doctrine opposed in this volume.

The reader may hence judge of the point at issue. The question is not whether Christ be the messenger of divine grace and mercy to men ; nor whether God hath constituted him the medium by which all the blessings of salvation come to sinners ; nor whether the suffering and death, as well as the teaching and resurrection of Jesus, had for their object the salvation of mankind ; nor whether Christ died for us, for our sins, in the sense in which such phrases are used in the New Testament ; nor whether there be any other name given among men whereby we can be saved : all these things are fully admitted ; but the question is, whether the doctrine of atonement, or satisfaction, be true, as stated above : and it is apprehended that, however some, in the present day, may refine upon the notion of vicarious sufferings and oblation, such a doctrine must, on the whole, lead to the same conclusions as the foregoing extracts plainly express.

It is presumed that the extracts from scripture, in the opposite columns, must convince the unbiased inquirer after truth, that the notion of Christ's

making satisfaction for the sins of men is contrary to the letter, as well as the spirit of divine revelation.—The scriptures clearly teach that God is love ; that he is merciful and gracious ; that he is unchangeable ; that he will not condemn and punish the guiltless ; that Christ was always the object of his love and good pleasure ; that he died a just and holy person ; that God forgives sins freely, on the ground of his rich mercy, and bestows all blessings freely. Hence, it is presumed, that it is not affirming too much, to say, that the doctrine of satisfaction is refuted by the express language of scripture. Certain it is that such language as the advocates for that doctrine have ever held can be no where found in the sacred writings ; and that the words of the sacred penmen must be strangely twisted to be brought into any seeming agreement with so strange an hypothesis.

CHAPTER SECOND.

The Doctrine of Satisfaction refuted by argument.

REAL evidence must ever be on the side of truth. Error and falsehood may have seeming evidence. It is by subjecting both to the scrutiny of reason, that the reality of the former will be perceived, and the fallacy of the latter detected. While things remain unexamined, and men take for granted that those particular notions, which are termed

orthodox, are certainly true and of the first importance, it is not to be wondered that they suppose such notions to be built on scripture, and supported by the most decisive proof; and that they think the opposite doctrines unscriptural, and destitute of any real evidence. The reader is not required to relinquish what he has hitherto thought a doctrine of divine truth, or to receive as true what he has been taught to regard as a dangerous error, without the most serious and careful examination, nor on any ground but such evidence as carries full conviction to his mind; but he is requested to do justice to himself and the subject, by giving it a candid and impartial examination. Let the advice of an apostle be regarded: ‘Prove all things.’ Truth cannot suffer by the closest scrutiny, it has nothing to fear from examination and exposure; its native excellence and convincing evidence will become the more manifest. Our opponents should consider, when they shrink from examination, by persuading others that it is dangerous to attend to the arguments we advance, that they are betraying the weakness of their own cause, and tacitly admitting that they dare not submit it to the ordeal of a rational investigation. Such a method may preserve men of weak and timid minds attached to the cause of reputed orthodoxy; but firm and vigorous souls, inspired with the ardent love of truth, will become the more anxious to examine what is said by both parties. It is not uncommon for persons who espouse the doctrine I oppose, to cry out against our arguments as carnal reasoning, to give

us credit for uncommon abilities, and to insinuate that it is dangerous for plain illiterate persons to put themselves in the way of, what they call, our sophisms. This we think ungenerous. We know not why our reasonings should be called carnal any more than theirs. They reason as well as we : and, whatever outcry may sometimes be made against reason, they certainly are glad of reason as an auxiliary so far as it is favourable to their cause. We suppose their reasonings are merely human, those of fallible creatures, as well as ours. We think no reasoning ought to be called carnal, unless it evidently flows from some sensual principle, or be prostituted to mere sensual purposes. Supposing we possessed the ability in arguing with which we have sometimes been complimented, it would not follow that we were the more likely to deceive others ; unless it could be proved that superior ability involves dishonesty. If we impose on others by substituting sophistry for sober argument, we lie open to detection : our opponents are numerous, and many of them men of parts and learning : let them detect our supposed sophisms, and disabuse the unlearned reader ; but it must be done by something more than merely raising an outcry against us. The arguments I am about to state, I trust, will be found perfectly adapted to the common reader.

I am aware that some sincere christians will feel shocked at the idea of arguments being constructed against a doctrine which they have ever held most sacred, and esteemed the ground of their hope as

sinners. It will not surprise me if such persons should load me with censures, and consider the present attempt as aimed at the foundation of the gospel. I would say to them, '*strike, but hear.*' I am willing to bear all their reproaches, if they will but seriously examine the arguments.

1. Those who maintain the doctrine of satisfaction, contradict themselves, and one part of their system destroys the other; for they suppose that all the blessings of grace and salvation originated in the love of God to man; yet that God was become wrathful, and either would not or could not save sinners, and receive them to his favour, unless Christ first appeased his wrath by bearing the punishment due to them for their sins. Now, if God loved a guilty world so greatly as to give his Son to save them, if all the blessings of grace and salvation flow from *his* pure love to sinners, it must follow that he was not wroth with them, however much he might disapprove of their conduct; for love and wrath cannot subsist, at the same time, in the same mind. If sinners are saved, and restored to the divine favour, because Christ has appeased the wrath of God, satisfied his justice, reconciled him, made him '*well-willing*' towards his creatures, it follows that Christ is the cause rather than the effect of God's love, and that the blessings of grace and salvation flow from what Christ hath done rather than from the pure love of the Deity. One part of this contradictory system must be false, nor need we be at a loss to tell which; for we read (John iii. 16.) that God so loved the world that he

gave his only begotten Son : and that all the blessings of the gospel flow from the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins. Ephe. ii. 4, 5. Again, they profess the doctrine of free grace, that sinners are saved by the grace of God; and that the gospel is throughout a system of free grace ; yet they represent salvation, and the divine favour, as coming to us by a kind of bargain between the Father and Son ; that Christ gave God a consideration for them, that he bought and paid for our redemption, which places the subject before us in the light of a bargain, of sale, purchase, and delivery, rather than that of a system of free favour. They talk of Christ's having merited our salvation for us, and that we are saved on the ground of his merits, and yet that we are saved by the free grace of God : which seems a flat contradiction ; for what is merited, and bestowed on the ground of merit, it matters not whether that of the sinner or of his substitute, can never be a free gift. If we will act rationally we must either give up the doctrine of free grace, or the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sins, of his having bought and paid, literally, for our redemption. Again, they talk of the mercy of God to sinners ; yet they contend that God shows no mercy but on the ground of full satisfaction made to his justice, which would supersede the need of mercy, and, in fact, leave no place for it ; for after justice had received all it could demand, and inflicted all the punishment due to the offender, it would be an act of mere justice to liberate him, nor could he justly

be detained as a criminal. Again, they generally profess to maintain the free forgiveness of sins, though in this they are opposed by a writer on their own side*; yet they will have it that God never cancels our debts but on the ground of their being all fully paid by Christ, as our substitute; in which case the discharge of the sinner would be purely legal; as when a debt is fully paid there can be nothing to forgive. In this dilemma what is to be done? It seems, either the doctrine of divine mercy and free forgiveness must be given up, or the notion of satisfaction must be renounced, or we must believe manifest contradictions. I am aware our opponents will not admit the propriety of this reasoning; they will perhaps cry out against it as a daring attack upon a doctrine long held sacred by many learned and pious men; but I appeal to the candid and impartial whether it be not just and rational, and leave others to extricate themselves, in the best manner they can, from the dilemmas in which their own system involves them.

2. The notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sins, and that sinners are saved on the ground of his satisfaction, involves ideas which are contrary to the nature of things; for it supposes sin, guilt, and punishment, innocence, and righteousness to be transferable: that our sins, guilt, and punishment were transferred to Christ; and that his innocency and righteousness are transferred to

* See the preceding chapter.

us. But the nature of these things must change before they can become transferable.

Sin is the transgression of some law ; it is the act of an intelligent being ; it cannot, in any sense, become the act of him who never participated in it ; it cannot, consistently with either truth or justice, be imputed to a person who is perfectly innocent. To impute sin is to charge crimes upon a person ; to charge crimes upon one who is innocent, is to fix a false charge upon him, and is contrary to every known law and principle of justice. God himself has protested against it, by saying, (Ezek. xviii. 20.) 'The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.' This prohibits the idea of the wickedness of the wicked being imputed, or transferred, to an innocent person, and of the righteousness of a righteous person being transferred, or set up to the account of the sinner. It follows that our sins could not be transferred or imputed to Christ.

Guilt is the consciousness of having sinned. It can attach to none but the actual transgressor. An innocent person can never be conscious of having sinned. To be conscious that others have sinned, and are guilty, fixes no guilt on an innocent man. Guilt must be personal or it cannot exist ; for conscious innocence precludes the possibility of feeling guilt, and a man must sin before he can become the subject of guilt. To impute guilt is to charge a man with being guilty : and the charge must be either true or false. If the person to whom

guilt is imputed, i. e. said to belong, be really culpable, the imputation is just; but if he be innocent, the imputation is unjust and false; and, if the person who imputes it be acquainted with his innocence, such imputation is universally held to be base and infamous. This is the case among men: and shall we ascribe to God a proceeding which would stamp infamy on the character of a mortal? To say the person to whom the guilt is imputed is willing it should be so, by no means removes the difficulty; for his agreeing to it does not make the imputation the less false, nor the less unjust in itself: he is innocent, and he cannot be reckoned guilty, consistently with truth and justice.

Punishment is any kind of penalty, pain, or suffering inflicted on a transgressor. For it to be just, he on whom it is inflicted must be really criminal. Pain and suffering, simply in themselves, are not punishment; they take the name of punishment only when inflicted for some crime. An innocent person may suffer; but it cannot with propriety be said he is punished. The word punishment implies criminality in the person on whom it is inflicted. Punishment, in criminal cases, cannot be transferred from the guilty to the innocent, without departing from the approved rules, and defeating the ends of punitive justice. Punishment must be intended either to secure or destroy the person of the offender that he may not repeat his crime, or to reform him, or to make reparation to society, or to deter others from what he suffers from committing similar crimes, or for several of

these ends combined ; but none of these ends could be secured by an innocent person suffering in the place and stead of the guilty. Such vicarious sufferings would leave the real criminal at liberty to repeat his crime if he pleased ; it would not be likely to reform him, as he would escape with impunity ; the slaying the innocent, in the place and stead of the guilty, could be no reparation to society ; nor would it be likely to deter others from similar acts of criminality. The established connection between crime and punishment must be dissolved before punishment can become transferable. If an innocent person should show himself ready to die in the place and stead of a criminal, the infliction of death on him would be execrated, and surely a deed so execrable is not to be ascribed to the divine government.

The doctrine of satisfaction also supposes innocence and righteousness to be transferable.—Innocence stands opposed to guilt. It must be personal or it cannot exist. To impute innocence to a guilty man is a false imputation. The innocence of one man cannot, in the nature of things, constitute another, who is guilty, innocent ; but the doctrine I am opposing supposes God to account the sinner innocent, or just, on the ground of his sin and guilt having been imputed to, and his punishment having been borne by Christ. Under this view it supposes an impossibility ; for God cannot view any person or thing otherwise than it is ; to suppose the contrary is to suppose him capable of viewing things in a false light, which is

impossible : he cannot view a guilty person otherwise than guilty, nor an innocent person otherwise than innocent. Righteousness consists in right dispositions and actions ; ‘ He who doeth righteousness is righteous.’ Righteousness must be personal, or it cannot exist. It cannot be transferred from one man to another. To impute the right dispositions and actions of one person to another is a false imputation, and leaves the person to whom righteousness is merely so imputed as much an unrighteous man as he was before. The supposed satisfaction of Christ would not be thought, by its advocates, to answer the purpose, if on the ground of it his righteousness were not transferred, or imputed, to the unrighteous person ; but this latter is impossible, consequently the doctrine itself is a mere nullity.

3. Neither Christ nor his apostles taught the doctrine of satisfaction, nor even hinted at it, not even on those occasions when it was most to be expected, if a doctrine of truth. Those who contend for the popular notion of atonement suppose that those who reject it must die in their sins ; for they make it a fundamental article of christian faith ; but when Jesus told the Jews, that except they believed that he was the Christ they would die in their sins, he added not a word about the necessity of their believing that he must die in the place and stead of sinners to atone the wrath of God, in order to their being saved : he left them totally in the dark about this supposed fundamental doctrine of the gospel. In his sermon on the mount he said not

a word about it ; though at the conclusion of that sermon he describes the man who builds on a good foundation, he gives not the least hint of his vicarious sacrifice being the foundation ; but declares that the man who heareth his sayings and doeth them is the wise builder. When he described the character of those who shall enter the heavenly kingdom, he said nothing about their believing his death to be satisfaction for their sins ; but makes the only qualification their doing the will of God. At a time when his disciples did not believe it was necessary he should die, he declared to Peter that he had confessed the truth upon which the church should be built ; though Peter had only confessed that Jesus the Son of man, was the Christ the Son of the living God. (See Matt. 16th chap.) It seems then our Lord did not make the notion of his death being vicarious an article of christian faith. Had the death of Christ been necessary to make satisfaction for the sins of men, it is reasonable to expect he would have told his disciples so, at the time when he was labouring to convince them of the necessity of his dying by the hands of wicked men ; but, though he mentioned several other reasons why he must suffer, he said not one word of what is thought by many christians most of all to render his death necessary ; he gave not the slightest hint that unless he died to satisfy divine justice they could not be saved. How can it be supposed, had the notion of satisfaction been true, he would have been silent on the subject at such a time ? After his resurrection, when showing how it be-

hoved him to suffer, not a hint is given of his saying a word about vindictive justice, of his having appeased the wrath of God, or made satisfaction, or any thing of the kind. When he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he gave no intimation of this being on the ground of his having purchased salvation for mankind. The total silence of Christ on the subject, throughout the whole of his ministry, when he was about to suffer, and after his resurrection, even on those occasions when, if the doctrine were true, it would have been natural for him to have introduced it, seems no weak argument against the popular notion of atonement.

According to the history given of the apostles' ministry, in the *book of Acts*, and their discourses recorded there, the apostles preserved the same silence respecting Christ's having made satisfaction for sins, as he had done before them. The advocates for this notion think it necessary, when preaching to unconverted sinners, to say a great deal about the vindictive justice of God, and the utter impossibility of his saving them on any ground but the complete satisfaction, or atonement, made by Christ to divine justice for all their sins. Had the apostles entertained the same views, it is reasonable to suppose, they would have insisted on the same points, when preaching to unconverted sinners; yet we do not find that they said one word either about vindictive justice, or satisfaction for sin. The silence of the apostles added to that of their master, respecting the doctrine of satisfaction, is a proof

that it is not a doctrine of the gospel ; for we can know of no doctrines of the gospel but what Jesus and his apostles taught.

4. Satisfaction demanded implies injury received by him who demands it, and a capability of receiving compensation ; but God is no more capable of receiving injury than he is of doing injury, or than he is of receiving benefit. Job xxxv. 6, 7, 8. ‘ If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him ? or if thy transgression be multiplied, what doest thou unto him ? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him ? or what receiveth he of thine hand ? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.’ Chap. xxii. 2, 3. ‘ Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself ? —Is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect ?’ Psa. xvi. 2, 3. ‘ O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, thou art my LORD ; my goodness extendeth not unto thee : but to the saints that are in the earth.’ As God is absolutely independent, above all influence, incapable of sustaining injury, or receiving benefit, from any one, it is impossible he should demand and receive satisfaction, or an equivalent for his favour to sinners.

But it is argued that, though he cannot be personally injured, his justice was injured, and that it was his justice required satisfaction : this affects not the argument ; for what is his justice separate from him whose justice it is ? Can justice, viewed abstractedly, be a person capable of acting and suffering, of receiving injury and compensation ?

The justice of any being is the rectitude of his conduct, the equity of his ways ; and, surely, the rectitude of the divine conduct was not diminished, nor the equity of God's ways interrupted, by the evil actions of his creatures. Justice can neither demand nor receive any thing, but as some one demands and receives it in the name of justice ; therefore to say that the justice of God demanded and received satisfaction is, in effect, the same thing as saying God himself demanded and received satisfaction. Sin is no where but in the creature, all its effects are restricted to the creature, and all the injury done by it is done to the creature ; consequently, it is in the creature that reparation for the evil produced by sin is required : and this reparation can only be made by the restoration of the sinner to purity and happiness ; in other words, by the removal of the evil from those who are the subjects of it : this is effected, not by an innocent person suffering in their place and stead, but by their reformation and recovery to the paths of rectitude.

It may be said, though God is not injured by our sins, yet the good of the moral system is, the interests of our fellow-creatures are ; and consequently satisfaction was necessary. To this I reply, whatever injury had been done to the moral system, it could not be repaired by the cruel murder of an innocent person, which is spoken of in the New Testament as a gross violation of moral principle : there seems no way of repairing the injury done to the moral system, but by the reformation

and future good conduct of those who have done it. However the interests of creatures may be injured by sin, it is not possible to compensate that injury by any thing but the amendment, and future right actions of those who have been injurious.

5. The notion of Christ's atoning the wrath of God, and reconciling him to sinners, is a contradiction to the divine immutability. If God be unchangeable, in one mind and none can turn him, the same from everlasting to everlasting, without variableness, or the least shadow of turning, how can it be true that our sins filled him with wrath and vindictive fury; and that Christ, by his death, appeased that wrath, or removed it, or 'turned it to grace?' If God, who is essentially love, became a God of wrath, in consequence of the sin of his creatures, this was one change; if, in consequence of the sufferings and satisfaction of Christ, he ceased to be a God of wrath, this was another change; and if, after all, wrath will be again kindled in him, and eternally burn against millions of his creatures, here will be still another change. But how can any change take place in an unchangeable being? and how can the doctrine which supposeth such changes be true? If you see a man wrathful and vindictive, and you appease his wrath and remove his vindictiveness, you effect a change in his mind; and, if you say Christ did the same thing with respect to God, you in fact say that he changed the mind of God. If you know a man who is at variance with another, and you reconcile him to the person

with whom he is at variance, you evidently effect a change in him towards that person ; so, if Christ reconciled God to the world, he must evidently have effected a change in him in favour of mankind. Reconciliation cannot take place without a change, under some view or other, taking place in the party who is reconciled. Christ never could reconcile God to man, for this obvious reason, because God is unchangeable ; and for this equally clear reason, because he always loved man, consequently never needed reconciling to him : he only hated sin, and to that he is no more reconciled than he was before Christ died, nor can he ever be reconciled to sin, unless he were capable of ceasing to be holy. The scriptures never speak of Christ's reconciling God to the world ; but of God's reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ. Had the Almighty ever been wrathful and vindictive, he must have eternally remained so ; for this clear reason, because he is unchangeable. If he ever loved his creatures, and felt nothing but love towards them, say when he made them, or when Christ had died for them, it must follow that he hath never for a moment ceased loving them, nor ever felt any thing but love towards them ; for the reason already alledged, because he is unchangeable. In the only place in the New Testament where the word atonement occurs (Rom. v. 11), it is not God, but man, who is said to have received the atonement. From all these considerations it is evident, Christ did not make an atonement to God for the sins of men, that he did not atone the di-

vine wrath, nor reconcile the Most High to his creatures.

6. The notion of Christ's making satisfaction for the sins of men, veils the infinite loveliness of the divine character. It places him in the back ground, in dark shades, to illustrate the superior amiableness of his Son and servant, the meek and lowly Jesus. The loving Father of all, the infinite source of every good, it arrays in infinite terrors : it fills the bosom of infinite love with wrath and fury : it distorts the features of infinite loveliness with anger infinitely fierce, and vengeance which cannot be averted until it be fully satiated, either with the blood of the innocent or the guilty : it shades the brow of infinite excellence with vindictiveness and revenge. In plain language, the doctrine of satisfaction represents the one God and Father of all, as a wrathful, vindictive being, who either will not, or cannot, extend his mercy to sinners, and receive them to his favour, unless an innocent person makes atonement to him for their sins, by enduring his wrath in their place and stead. The Son it represents as a very different character, as every thing that is amiable and affectionate : in him no wrath, nothing vindictive is seen : he stands between his angry Father and offending man, endures in his own person all the weight of his displeasure, all the fierceness of his wrath, and so shelters sinners 'from the eye of a revenging God,' and makes him 'well-willing' towards them. Who in such a representation can recognize the God of love, the infinite Father of mercies, who is

good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, who delighteth in mercy, and is ever ready to forgive? If the character of God be what the scriptures declare it, if he be not a wrathful, vindictive being, if his nature be not revengeful,—in a word, if God be LOVE, satisfaction for sins could never be necessary ‘to make him favourable and merciful to us.’ On the other hand, the supposing satisfaction for sins necessary ‘to make the Father favourable and merciful to us,’ implies a denial that mercy and grace are essential to his nature; and involves the supposition that they are excited in him by some external cause. Surely a doctrine which involves so many things incompatible with the divine character cannot be true. This argument is strengthened by the consideration that Christ is said to be the image of God; but, according to what we have noticed above, he and the Father would form a striking contrast. How could his sympathizing tenderness illustrate the Father’s vindictiveness? his loving and forgiving temper the Father’s wrathfulness? If his temper and conduct be illustrative of the character and conduct of the Father, as made known by his teachings, it is certain God never was wrathful and vindictive, and that Christ never taught the popular doctrine of atonement.

7. The doctrine of satisfaction degrades the justice of God, by supposing it to be a vindictive, revengeful principle, ever thirsting for blood, and to be satisfied with nothing short of the blood, either of the innocent, or of the guilty: and that,

even after plunging its vengeful sword in the soul of the innocent, it still pursues multitudes of the guilty, whose punishment he bore, and exacts a second payment of debts which the innocent victim paid with his own blood, and relentlessly plunges them in the flames of hell, because they cannot satisfy its demands, which were all satisfied by his suffering in their stead: that it first demanded the life of God's holy one, devoted him, as an accursed person, to the death of the cross, inflicted on him 'the very pains and torments of hell,' and was incapable of being satisfied without his blood, and then charged his crucifiers with murder because they shed his blood, and subjected them to the most exemplary punishment for their conduct, though they are supposed to have done no more than justice required should be done, and that God 'decreed that those very persons should be the actors of this vile tragedy, who acted therein, and not others.' No, the doctrine which arrays the justice of that being who is LOVE in such frightful colours, abhorrent even to the feelings of common sense, cannot be true. Justice consists in doing that which is right; and both reason and scripture proclaim that it cannot be right to impute guilt to an innocent person, and to punish him for it as a sinner; the thing is declared an abomination to the LORD; Pro. xvii. 5. and he would not do what is an abomination to him: the law of God prohibited it; Exo. xxiii. 7. *The innocent and righteous slay thou not*; and he would not violate his own law. If he condemned

and punished the innocent, how could he find fault with others for imitating him? *Is God unrighteous?—God forbid; for how then shall God judge the world?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. To require the payment of debts which are already paid, or to punish crimes which are fully expiated, would be manifestly unjust. To punish men for doing what justice required should be done would be flagrant injustice; but either justice did not require that the Jews should put Christ to death, or such injustice must appear in their punishment.

The justice of God consists in his doing, in every case, that which is according to the rectitude of his own holy nature, which is LOVE. Ought it to be said, that the justice of God could not admit of sinners being pardoned without first exacting full damages on their account; seeing his justice consists in his doing that which is most right for infinite wisdom and goodness to do? How can it be proved wrong for a being possessed of these attributes to pardon penitent sinners freely? The justice of God, that infinite rectitude which governs the universe, is not unmerciful, it knows how to exercise compassion; this appears from the dealings of divine Providence with sinful man. That man who is the least defiled, who has all his natural feelings in the purest state, and who feels the most of the influence of the gospel, will ever be the most ready to forgive offences freely, without exacting damages; he will be satisfied with the repentance of the offender; then this must surely be the case, in the highest degree, with that

God who gave all the feelings of nature, and communicated all the influences of the gospel. Christ is called the just one, he was the brightest living image of the just God that ever appeared among men; did *he* require an atonement in order to his forgiving offences? did he call for satisfaction to be made to him before he pardoned those who did him the greatest injury? No, unasked, he sent a message of forgiveness to his murderers, he showed himself always ready to forgive freely, to communicate favours without receiving any consideration for them: there was no wrath to atone in him, he waited for nothing but the penitence of the sinner in order to his pronouncing him forgiven. Such was the conduct of this just person; and surely it may be regarded as an illustration of the divine justice.

8. To say that God cannot forgive sins without first receiving satisfaction for them, seems to limit the divine sovereignty, as well as tie up the hands of infinite love and mercy. If God be the absolute sovereign of the universe, and can do whatever he pleaseth, and who will dare to question this, it must be a prerogative essential to him to manifest his love, and exercise his mercy, when, where, and how he pleaseth—to extend pardon to sinners according to his sovereign will. To deny this is to deny his absolute sovereignty. Earthly rulers and governors possess only a derived and limited power, they are not superior to all law, they are not absolutely unaccountable for their conduct; consequently the prerogative of doing

whatever they please cannot properly belong' to them; but the power of the supreme Governot of the universe is underived, he is superior to all law, for he is the original fountain of it; he has nothing to bind him but his own sovereign will, he is not accountable to any being in the universe, he ever acts from the pure dictate of his own infinite mind, and can do whatever he pleaseth: consequently he can, on the ground of his own sovereignty, pardon penitent sinners, without any other consideration but the mercifulness of his own nature. 'No,' say the advocates for the doctrine of satisfaction, 'God cannot forgive unless his justice be first satisfied.' Presumptuous saying! Have not these men read that he giveth none account of his matters, and that whatsoever his soul desireth, even that he doth? Who shall dare to prescribe rules of conduct to his Maker? to prohibit his showing mercy only in such a way as puny mortals, who have hedged themselves round with their little systems of reputed orthodoxy, may think proper? Let such men know that his thoughts are not their thoughts, neither are their ways his ways; that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than their ways, and his thoughts than their thoughts: Isa. lv. 8, 9. The doctrine of satisfaction does not leave to the Almighty the free and sovereign exercise of his love and mercy. Whatever love and mercy it supposes to exist in God, none can be exercised unless an innocent person first suffers the penalty due to sinners, and makes expiation for their sins; consequently, the exer-

cise of divine love and mercy is, by this doctrine, made not to depend on the supreme and sovereign will of God, but on the satisfaction which the innocent person makes for the guilty. A doctrine which limits the divine sovereignty, and leaves not to God the free exercise of his mercy, according to his mere good pleasure, but makes the Almighty dependent on what a third person shall consent to do and suffer on behalf of sinners, for the exercise of that attribute in which he delighteth, is not likely to be true; for God will ever do according to his own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

9. The doctrine of satisfaction is hard to reconcile, if at all reconcilable, with the idea of sinners being saved by the mercy of God. Mercy has for its object mere wretchedness and misery; it does not exist on the ground of merit or desert; it is pity flowing from the heart towards the unhappy or distressed. The doctrine I oppose supposes that the divine clemency towards sinners does not arise merely from the pity of his heart, excited by a view of their wretchedness; but that it was merited for them by what Christ suffered in their place and stead; and where merit begins, properly speaking, mercy terminates. If justice received full satisfaction on the behalf of sinners, at the hands of Christ; if he, literally, purchased salvation for them, it is very difficult to find any room for mercy to be exercised towards them; they have, in that case, a right to salvation on the ground of mere justice, and may cry, not mercy,

mercy, but ‘Justice, justice, my righteous God!—be just and faithful, to acquit me from that debt, and cancel that bond which my surety hath paid for me.’ It would be difficult to say, upon this ground, what need sinners could have of the mercy of God; as every thing would proceed according to the principles of the most strict and rigid justice. The punishment due to the sinner is inflicted, justice receives all it can demand, the blessings which the sinner receives are honestly paid for, mercy seems out of the question. The advocates for the popular doctrine of atonement, many of them, cry out against those who build their hope of salvation upon the mercy of God, which makes it evident that *they* hope for salvation upon a different ground: yet Jesus himself taught that the publican, who cast himself entirely upon the divine mercy, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner,’ went down to his house justified, rather than the pharisee, who thought he could claim blessings on some different ground. Indeed there is no ground of hope placed before sinners in the scriptures but the mercy of God, and that mercy is revealed to us in Christ Jesus. We ought therefore to reject a doctrine which strikes at the foundation of a sinner’s hope, namely, at the free mercy of God.

10. The notion of Christ’s making satisfaction for sins, seems incompatible with the doctrine of the free forgiveness of sins, which is plainly taught in the scriptures. If no sinner be exempted from punishment, but on the ground of a substitute’s

having first suffered all the punishment due to him in his stead, it is difficult to conceive how it can with truth be said that the sinner has any thing forgiven, any more than an insolvent man could be said to have all his debts forgiven by his creditors, who would not have set him at liberty at all, had they not first received the full amount of what he owed them, at the hands of his surety. Many writers of credit, on the side of our opponents, have compared sins to debts, and have called the sins of men debts to the law or justice of God ; they have also spoken of the sufferings and death of Christ as a full discharge or payment of those debts : now if this be the case, what room or need is there for forgiveness ? A debt cannot be both paid and forgiven. When the whole of a debt is paid nothing remains to forgive. To talk of forgiveness after full payment is made is ridiculous. If sinners be acquitted only on the ground of Christ's having made full payment of all the demands of justice on them, there can be no such a thing as the free forgiveness of sins. If all the penalties due to the sinner were inflicted on Christ, no penalty is remitted, and where no penalty is remitted nothing is forgiven. One writer in defence of satisfaction (quoted in the preceding chapter) is ingenuous enough to acknowledge, that, on the ground of that doctrine, ' in a strict and proper sense, the infinite God doth not *forgive* sin.' But if this be true, the Most High is no longer a *God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin* ; there is not *forgiveness* with him ; *forgivenesses* belong

not to him. What shall we do in this case? shall we give up every thing we read in the scriptures concerning *pardon* and *forgiveness*, that we may retain the unscriptural notion of satisfaction? No, we will let that notion go, however orthodox it may be esteemed, and cleave to the orthodoxy of the prophets and apostles, believing that God will freely pardon the penitent sinner, that he is ever ready to forgive, and rejoicing that he hath forgiven us all trespasses.

11. It is no where said, in the sacred writings, that God pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression, because he hath received satisfaction on behalf of the sinner; yet this should have been said, if he forgive sinners only on the ground of his being first satisfied, by a righteous person's bearing all the penalties incurred by them in their place and stead; but it is said that he pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin, *because he delighteth in mercy*. If it be on account of the pleasure he taketh in the exercise of mercy that he forgives, it cannot be on account of his wrath being stoned, and his justice satisfied, by the sufferings of an innocent person.

12. Sinners are no where, in the sacred oracles, encouraged to expect pardon from God on the ground of his having received satisfaction on their behalf; yet this is the only ground on which they should be encouraged to look for pardon, if what the advocates for satisfaction contend for be true, and this is the ground on which *they* encourage sinners to expect salvation; but the scriptures

assure us that the penitent sinner shall be forgiven, —that whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy,—that if the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the LORD, he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon, without adding one word about satisfaction being first necessary.

13. Jesus Christ taught the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, and illustrated it by parables ; but he gave no intimation that a substitute was necessary to pay the debts of sinners, or satisfy for their sins, before they could be forgiven. Take, for instance, the parable of the two debtors. Luke vii. 41, 42. *There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty : and when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both.* Here was a fit occasion for Christ to have introduced a surety as paying the debt, and no doubt he would have done it had it been illustrative of God's method of saving sinners. An advocate for the popular notion of atonement would not have failed to insist on the necessity of the debt being paid before justice could suffer it to be cancelled, that as the debtor could not pay it himself some other person must pay it for him ; but Christ gave not the least intimation that a surety was necessary to pay the debt, or that any payment was required ; indeed what he says proves that the debt was cancelled without being paid ; he made the consideration which led to the cancelling of it to be, not the payment of its amount by a sponsor, but the inability of the debtor to pay.

any thing : this was his method of illustrating the way in which God forgives sins, and saves sinners. In another parable (Matt. xviii. 23—35.) he represented forgiveness as bestowed in consideration of penitence and prayer, and that if any thing prevent the sinner, who supplicates for it, receiving the remission of sins, it is his not acting in a proper disposition to others. In the whole account, Christ dropped not one word respecting either debtor, or creditor, supposing a third person must pay the debt before it could be forgiven ; but throughout he represented it either as cancelled without payment, or as still standing against the principal. Hence it is clear Jesus Christ gave no countenance to the popular notion of atonement, but taught an opposite doctrine. If the doctrine of satisfaction be true, it must be the most important article in the affair of forgiveness, and such I believe its advocates esteem it ; but, were this the case, it would be very strange that Christ should be totally silent respecting this most important article when expressly illustrating the way of forgiveness. This argument is strengthened by the remembrance that when Jesus said, he had power on earth to forgive sins, he gave not the least intimation that he had bought and must pay for that power ; which would be the fact on the supposition of satisfaction ; for, if no sin could be forgiven unless its punishment was borne, he must have bought and paid for the power of forgiving it by bearing that punishment.

14. The law of God has been placed in a false light by the belief of the doctrine of satisfaction.

Hence the divine law has been represented as requiring of us what is impracticable, as being a mere covenant of works, as knowing nothing of mercy ; and it has been said, that no man since Adam, except Christ, ever did or could keep it, and that it would be dishonoured if a sinner were pardoned without an innocent victim's first suffering its penalties. On these points I will animadvert.

By the phrase, *the law*, as it is generally used by the sacred writers, I understand, that code, or dispensation, which was given to Israel, during the ministry of Moses. This law was not in being until it was given at Mount Sinai, it was given by Moses ; John i. 17. consequently, its penalties could not attach to those who lived before it was given ; for it cannot reasonably be supposed that God will judge his creatures by an *ex post facto* law. The law and its penalties could never belong to any but those to whom it was given : for it would be charging God foolishly to suppose he would subject his creatures to the penalties of a law which he never gave them, but of which they were unavoidably ignorant. The law was never given to the gentiles, but to the people of Israel only : Paul said the gentiles had not the law : Rom. ii. 14. and that what things soever the law said, it said to them who were under it, Chap. iii. 19. meaning the Jews. Christ did not extend the law beyond the Jewish nation : he did not commission his apostles to carry it to the gentiles : he sent the gospel, not the law, to be preached to all nations. The law was superseded by the full introduction of the

gospel: by the more perfect code, or dispensation, which Christ introduced: so Paul contended (Gal. iii. 24, 25.) that the law was a school-master unto Christ; but that after faith, or the truth of the gospel, is come, we are no longer under the law: hence it is clear that the ministration of the law terminated when the ministration of the gospel was fully introduced. It follows that whatever curses the law denounced, whatever penalties were incurred by the breach of it, they did not attach to the gentiles who had not the law, they cannot belong to those who live under the gospel, for the ministration of the law extends not to them; it also follows, that Christ could not bear the curse of the law for us gentiles who were never under it, and of course could never be under its curse. Our sins have been committed against the gospel, under which we were born, have all along lived, and by which we must be judged. Had Christ made satisfaction to the law for the sins of men, it could only have been for the sins of those who lived under it; and it would have been no satisfaction for our sins who were never under it; had he borne the penalties due to those who sin against the gospel, and made satisfaction for them, he must have borne the penalties which himself hath announced in the New Testament, and have made satisfaction, not to the law, but to his own gospel. If it be said, all have sinned against the moral law, and it was necessary Christ should make satisfaction to the moral law on their behalf; it is answered, that the moral law, as distinguished from the law

of Moses, must intend the law of nature, or those obligations which result from the nature and relation of things. But the law of nature breathes no curses, it inflicts no penalties, but what arise from evil actions. The moral law cannot be satisfied in any way but by the due fulfilment of moral obligations ; it accepts not of mulcts and penalties in lieu of personal moral excellence, much less can vicarious sufferings answer its demands.

It has been asserted that the law of God requires what creatures have not power to perform, and that, consequently, some other person must satisfy its demands ; but this is to make the law of God unjust. If a law require me to act beyond my strength, to do what I never had power to do, it is evidently an unjust law. It makes no difference to say that a predecessor of mine, a hundred generations back, had power to keep such a law ; for, if so, it might be just to require it of him, but it is neither reasonable nor just to require me to perform impossibilities, and it would be absolute cruelty to punish me for not performing them. An impracticable law can be neither just nor good ; not just because impracticable, not good because it can be of no use as a rule of conduct ; and, if there be severe penalties attached to the non-performance of what it requires, it must be cruel and infamous. It would be as proper to condemn a man for not creating a world, as it would be to condemn him for not obeying a law which he had not power to obey. This cannot be a true description of any law which God ever gave ; he is too just and good

to require impossibilities of his creatures, much less to punish them for not performing impossibilities. He is not a hard master, reaping where he hath not sown, and gathering where he hath not strewed; not like cruel Pharaoh, who required bricks without straw: he accepteth according to what a man hath. To say that the people to whom the law was given were incapable of keeping it, is to charge Moses and the God of Israel with solemn mockery, in calling upon them, and pressing them by the most weighty considerations, to keep it; and with the greatest cruelty, in denouncing the most awful curses on those who should break it.

But, it is said the law was given to convince and condemn men, that they might see the necessity of its demands being satisfied by Christ, in their place and stead, and that 'to convince and to condemn is all the law can do;' but if so, why was not this declared when the law was first given? Why were the people mocked with the idea that life was set before them in the law, and that they might attain life by obeying it? And why did an apostle, ages after, declare that it was ordained to life? Why were not the people told that the law could not be obeyed by them, that it could only condemn and curse them, that it was given to convince them that they could not do the will of God, that they might trust in Christ's obeying it for them, at some future period? They certainly were not told any thing like this; but, on the contrary, were assured that life was set before them,

and that they might attain it by obeying the law : nor was the least intimation given that Christ should either obey it, or bear its penalties, for them. That the law became a ministration of condemnation and death, was owing to the transgression of it ; and the gospel, in like manner, will become a ministration of condemnation and death, at the second coming of Christ, to those who disobey it.

It is argued that the law of God is so perfect, that when a man has committed one sin, however small, it can do nothing for him but condemn him, and that no man could be accepted by the law unless he was absolutely sinless ; but how does this appear ? If the law could do nothing but condemn and curse those who had once sinned, it could only condemn and curse the people of Israel from the first day it was given to them ; for they had already sinned : had this been the case, how could Moses have spoken of them as blessed above all nations in having that law, and living under the dispensation of it ? Ought he not rather to have said they were cursed above all nations ? for if they could receive nothing from the law but its curses, and they were become unavoidable to them, they certainly were placed under many dreadful curses from which other nations remained exempt. But this could not be the case. It would be neither wise, just, nor good, to give to men, who had already sinned, a law only adapted to pure and perfect creatures. The perfection of the law consisted in its being adapted to the moral

state and wants of the people to whom it was given : as it is said (Psa. xix. 7.) ‘The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul :’ conversion implies the existence of sin, consequently, the law was adapted to men as sinners ; it contained a provision for them as such ; it did not require that men should be absolutely sinless in order to their being accepted with God ; only that they should believe its declarations, conform to its institutions, and obey its precepts.

It has been said that the law was a mere covenant of works ; but no such thing is declared in the scriptures. If the law required obedience, in order to the attainment of life, so does the gospel ; the latter no more promises life to the disobedient than the former. Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him ; he hath declared that those only who do the will of his Father shall enter the heavenly kingdom. But would it be proper on this account to call the gospel a covenant of works ? certainly not ; yet it would be as proper as it is to call the law a covenant of works, merely because it required obedience in order to the bestowment of life, and promised life to none but the obedient. The Sinai covenant was given on the ground of God’s previous promise of grace to Abraham, consequently it stood on the foundation of grace ; and the law was not against the promises (Gal. iii. 17.) : its basis was the peculiar favour manifested to Israel in *Jehovah’s* taking them to be his people, and the great deliverance he had wrought for them. The giving them his

covenant manifested peculiar favour! Though the law made the knowledge of sin abound, yet in it grace did much more abound: Rom. v. 20. From these considerations, it appears, that, so far from being merely a covenant of works, the law was a covenant of grace.

Often has it been said, the law knew nothing of mercy or forgiveness; than which nothing seems more untrue. We read in the decalogue of God's showing mercy to thousands of generations: under the law God proclaimed himself *merciful, and gracious, pardoning iniquity, and transgression, and sin*. His symbolical throne was the *mercy-seat*. Many of the institutions and requirements of the law were intended to display the divine mercy, and to bring the people nigh to receive forgiveness from God. All these things we find in the law of which men have said, it knew nothing of mercy, and that it could permit no mercy to be extended to the sinner, unless its demands were first satisfied. Hence it appears, that the law of God never was that rigorous system of stern justice, standing upon full satisfaction, and knowing nothing of clemency, which men have represented it.

Again, it has been said that no man ever did keep the law; but this is contradicted by facts. God said of Caleb, 'He hath followed me fully:' surely it must mean according to the whole tenor of his law; for had he deviated from it he had not followed God *fully*. It is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth that 'They were both righteous before

God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless :’ Luke i. 6. It must mean that they walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the law blameless ; for this was the rule of their actions ; and, had they transgressed the law, it could not have been said they were blameless. Christ said of Nathanael, ‘ Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile :’ John i. 47. It must mean one who kept the law. Hence it is evident there were, at least, some individuals who did keep the law.

It has been taken for granted by the advocates for the doctrine of satisfaction, that the legal sacrifices were vicarious ; but of this there is no proof : and there is substantial proof of the contrary. Not to enter into a particular examination of Jewish sacrifices, in this place, as that will be done in another part of this work, suffice it to observe here, that it is evident they were not vicarious, because they were not to be offered in any case when life was forfeited by the transgression of the law ; consequently, not being vicarious themselves, they could not point to a vicarious sacrifice as their antitype.

It has been also taken for granted that the people of Israel knew that their sacrifices were typical, and that they could, all along, under the law, look through them to another and a better sacrifice ; but how is all this to be proved ? There is no evidence that they knew that the Messiah promised to them was to suffer and die. That some of their prophets foretold his sufferings and death

is no proof that they understood that it would be so; for many of the prophecies were not understood prior to their accomplishment. Before the time of David there was nothing revealed that can be pretended to be a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ: consequently many centuries must have elapsed after the legal sacrifices were appointed, before the people of Israel could have any idea that Christ was to suffer: and it may fairly be questioned whether they had any idea that he was to suffer before the event actually took place. It is clear that when he appeared among them they had no conception of his dying, if he were the Christ; for they said, ‘We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever:’ this proves that they thought that the true Christ would not die. Our Lord’s own disciples, who, in addition to all they had learned from Moses and the prophets, had been instructed by John the Baptist, and by Jesus, had still no idea that it was necessary that Christ should die: the idea of his dying staggered their faith in him as the Messiah: and it cannot be thought that *they* were less informed than the rest of their countrymen. The Ethiopian nobleman, though it would seem he was a sincere proselyte to Judaism, when reading what is acknowledged to be one of the plainest prophecies of the sufferings of Christ, in the Old Testament, could not understand to whom it related. Hence it may be safely concluded that the people under the law had no knowledge that Christ was to die: and if they did not know assuredly that he was to die,

it was impossible for them to view their sacrifices as typical of his death.

Had it been appointed for the Jews to offer their sacrifices as types of another and a better sacrifice, they ought to have been informed so; but did Moses give them any information upon this subject? Not the least intimation occurs throughout the whole law that their sacrifices were typical, and that it was necessary for them to look through them to another and a better sacrifice. They were left totally in the dark upon this subject. None of their prophets pointed it out to them afterwards. Not a word occurs in the whole of the Old Testament respecting the Jewish sacrifices being typical, or respecting the necessity of another and a better sacrifice as the antitype of them. They were often reprov'd for offering their sacrifices without having a proper regard to moral purity; but never for not having a regard to what is commonly called the great antitype of their sacrifices. It seems then it was impossible the Jews should know that their sacrifices were typical, because they had no information on the subject, or that it was necessary to look forward to another and a better sacrifice, or that the promised Messiah was to be sacrificed. If this knowledge be necessary to salvation now, it must always have been so; but had it been necessary under the law it would certainly have been communicated.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews having applied the Jewish sacrifices as types and figures, proves nothing respecting their being so in their

original institution; for he was writing to Jews, and makes much use of the *argumentum ad hominem*; his design seems to have been to show that whatever advantages they might boast as derived from the law, superior advantages were to be derived from the gospel of Christ: hence he makes comparisons wherever he thought the subject would bear it.

It has been further said, the law would be dishonoured if a sinner were pardoned without an innocent victim first suffering in his place and stead; but this is contradicted by matter of fact. When David had sinned in the affair of Uriah, and the law admitted of no sacrifice in his case, of no innocent victim to bleed for his crime, God, by his prophet, declared that he had put away his sin: nor did the law interpose, and say it was unjust, that David's sin could not be pardoned until its demands were first satisfied by a vicarious sacrifice. David, without any idea of an innocent victim suffering in his place and stead, cast himself on the mercy of God, presenting to him the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit, believing that he would not despise that sacrifice: nor did he despise it. This proves that God can, consistently with his law, forgive sins, though no other sacrifice be presented to him but a broken and contrite spirit.

I have been the more particular in my remarks on the divine law, because through mistaken notions of it many arguments are constructed in favour of the doctrine of satisfaction.

15. The gospel exhibits free salvation to a guilty world ; it proclaims pardon on the ground of divine free favour. Christ, and all the blessings enjoyed through him, are said to arise from the great love and rich mercy of God. The doctrine of satisfaction seems to strike at the foundation of this system of free grace and salvation ; by laying as the foundation of redemption—not the great love and rich mercy of the Deity, but—a vicarious sacrifice, by which it was supposed the wrath of God was appeased, his vengeance satiated, and he reconciled ; and so placing the whole transaction before us in the light of a bargain, not of a free gift arising from nothing but love. If the blessings of the gospel come to us ‘in the way of a contract or bargain,’ how can they come to us in the way of free gift ? If Christ procured our salvation by bearing all the penalties due to us for our sins, by letting justice ‘fetch its pennyworths out of his blood,’ how can it be true that we are saved by the free favour of God ? If the wrath of God be turned from us merely because Christ hath endured the whole of it in our place and stead, how can it be true that the mercy of God to us flows from the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins ? on that supposition it rather flows from the satisfaction his justice has received at the hands of our substitute. Grace means favour ; free-grace, free-favour ; but where every thing proceeds according to contract, stipulation, or bargain, and is bought and paid for, nothing can be a free gift, and free favour is out

of the question. What is bought and paid for can never, with truth, be said to be freely given. What is contracted for, and received in consequence of its full value being given for it, cannot be of grace, it must be of works, even of the works of him who paid the proper price of it. If the work of Christ, in suffering, satisfied all the demands of justice on our behalf, and paid the full price of our salvation, it follows that our salvation arises from a work done, though not by us; and how then can it be said that we are saved by the grace of God? Our opponents have long claimed the title of advocates for free-grace; but to this title they can have no just claim, while they continue to assert that we should never have been saved had not Christ paid to God, or to his justice, an equivalent, or consideration, for our deliverance. Free-grace excludes the idea of bargain, equivalent, satisfaction for sin, and every other consideration, as an inducement, but the benevolence of the giver. If all the blessings of the gospel flow from the great love of God, they are not procured at his hand by an equivalent which Christ gave to him. If salvation be by grace, it is not procured by any work done, either by ourselves, or any other person for us. If we are saved by the free favour of God, it follows that we are not saved by a satisfaction made to his justice, in consequence of which it ceases to have any further demand upon us, such satisfaction being incompatible with free favour.

16. The scheme of satisfaction lays, as the foundation of hope for sinners, something out of and distinct from God. It leads not to the unmerited favour and mere mercy of God, as a source of relief to the sinner who is filled with remorse ; but to the merits of Christ, and of his death : as if God would have been incapable of showing any favour unless some one had merited it ! It places in view, not God's readiness to forgive, arising from the pure benevolence of his nature, but the innocent Jesus falling the victim of divine wrath, agonizing under the weight of our guilt and punishment, and a vengeful God appeased by the exquisite sufferings of his beloved Son, immolated by his own hand, to render him favourable to sinners. It encourages no confidence in the pure love and mere mercy of God, in the simple beneficence of his nature ; but leads the guilty creature to think that his only chance of escaping divine wrath is, that, so far as due to him, it exhausted itself on the head of the holy Jesus. It leads to the supposition that there is nothing in God, in his character, in his essential mercifulness, that could have given any hope to a sinner, had not his vengeance been satiated with the blood of an innocent person. But so far from Christ and his death, in distinction from what God is in and of himself, being the only ground of hope to sinners, an apostle hath declared that Christ was manifested, offered himself to God, was raised and glorified that our faith and hope might be in God : 1 Pet. i. 19—21. All that Christ did is intended

to lead us to God, and establish our hope in him. In opposition to this, the scheme of satisfaction supposes the only ground of our hope to be Christ's having given to God an equivalent, or consideration for our deliverance.

17. If Christ had made full satisfaction to divine justice for the sins of the world, by bearing the whole of the punishment due to them, there could have been no further punishment of sin. Many of the advocates for the satisfaction scheme say that Christ satisfied, or made atonement to God, for the sins of the whole world; that justice received at his hand, as the surety, the whole of its demands on sinners, and that he suffered all the penalties of a broken law. If all this be true there can be no future punishment; for if the sins of the whole world be atoned, or satisfied for, there can be nothing to bring into judgment, or to punish hereafter. If justice received all its demands at the hand of Christ, as the surety of sinners, it can have nothing to demand of the sinner: it would be unjust first to receive full payment of the surety, and afterwards demand a second payment of the principal; for the surety's paying the debt must, in the eye of all law, and common sense, fully exonerate the principal. If Christ suffered all the penalties of a broken law, in the place and stead of sinners, it can have no further penalty to inflict: consequently there can be no future punishment. Those who maintain universal salvation, and deny all future punishment, are the only advocates for the doctrine of satisfaction

who are consistent with themselves; they, in this instance, admit its just consequence. Yet it is evident, from what we read in the New Testament, that the wicked will be punished hereafter, that justice will inflict terrible penalties on them: and who will dare to say that their punishment will be unjust? Hence it is clear that Christ hath not made satisfaction for their sins, that he hath not been punished in their place and stead; for if he had they could not, justly, be punished in their own persons. I am aware that many of our opponents contend that Christ only bore the guilt and punishment of the elect, and that those whose punishment he bore will not be punished hereafter. So far are they consistent with themselves; but from the moment he had borne their guilt and punishment, they ought to have been exonerated from all the painful consequences of sin, the guilt which he had taken upon himself ought not to have been laid upon their consciences, no guilty feelings ought ever to have tortured their minds, no curse ought to have been denounced against them, if he endured the whole in their place and stead. The feelings of every sinner prove that Christ hath not made satisfaction for sin; for he feels it charged upon him in his own conscience. If a friend pay a debt for me, I ought not only never to be called upon to pay it, I ought not, in justice, to be troubled about it; my creditor receives his due, and what can he desire more? If Christ had fully satisfied all the demands of law and justice, on behalf of sinners, they ought never

after to have been troubled by either law or justice on the business.

18. If the doctrine of satisfaction be true, those for whom Christ died must have ceased to be accountable for their conduct. If he stood in their place, answered for them, and made full satisfaction for their sins, they have in fact nothing to be accountable for; he has settled every thing on their behalf. If all their sins were imputed to him, set up to his account, and atoned for by him; and his perfect righteousness be imputed to them, set up to their account, and so made theirs; if every thing which relates to them be transacted by a representative; how can they in their own persons be brought to judgment? and for what are they to be judged? If justice received full satisfaction on their behalf, at the hands of Christ, how can it call them to account? Thus, it seems, the doctrine of satisfaction, if true, would destroy the accountability of man, and set aside the future judgment, at least so far as relates to those for whom Christ died. Such persons might well sing,

‘ He answers and fulfils his Father’s broken laws,
 ‘ Behold my soul at freedom set;
 ‘ My surety paid the dreadful debt.’

But Christ himself, as the minister of divine justice, will call every man to an account, and render to him according to his works.

19. The advocates for the satisfaction scheme contend that, when it is said Christ died for us, it

means that he died in the place and stead of us ; but if so, how comes it to pass that we die also ? And might it not with equal propriety be said, that his dying for our sins, means his dying in the place and stead of our sins ? that his appearing in the presence of God for us, means his appearing there in the place and stead of us ? that his interceding for us, means his interceding in the place and stead of us ? yea, might it not, by such a construction of words, be said that any thing which one person does for another, is done in the place and stead of the other ? But the absurdity of such reasoning is manifest. Still it is frequently argued that Christ's dying for us must imply that his death was vicarious, and that he died to make satisfaction for our sins ; but if so, will it not follow that when christians are called to suffer for Christ, and to lay down their lives for the brethren, they are called to endure vicarious sufferings, to die in the place and stead of Christ and the brethren, to make satisfaction for them ; seeing the forms of expression are the same in both cases ? Is it not evident that Christ's dying for us, means his dying *on our account*—not his dying *in our stead, under the weight of our punishment* ?

20. The doctrine of satisfaction retains the old popish idea of works of supererogation. It supposes Christ to have performed, not only all the obedience which he owed personally to God, but also a surplus of obedience sufficient to constitute all mankind righteous, without any personal righteousness of their own ; but this is incapable of

proof. We learn from the scriptures that Jesus Christ did and suffered every thing in obedience to the will of his Father; the vows of God were upon him; his law was in his heart; he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Could Christ have deviated, in a single instance, either in refusing to do or suffer whatever his Father commanded, without transgressing his supreme will? If he could not, did he perform more than the duty which he owed to his heavenly Father? If all he did and suffered was comprehended in the obedience which he owed to his God and Father, how could any thing he either did or suffered be vicarious? I know not of any answer these questions will admit but what will be fatal to the doctrine of satisfaction. As all that Christ did and suffered was comprehended in his personal obedience to the will of God, and was required of him personally by the Father, it follows that he performed no works of supererogation, which may be transferred or made over to others.

Again, if, as the doctrine of satisfaction supposes, sinners are made perfectly righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, independent of any obedience of their own, it follows that all their works of obedience are works of supererogation; for they were perfectly righteous without them, through the righteousness of another imputed to them. But both scripture and reason teach that every part of obedience to God is necessary to him who performs it, essential to

the character of a truly righteous man, that there can be no works of supererogation ; consequently the doctrine which supposes the existence of such works must be false.

21. Again, the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sins establishes the doctrine of merit, yea even of human merit. Its advocates are continually talking of the merits of Christ, and that they expect all blessings from God on the ground of the merits of Christ ; as if God would bestow no favour unless some one had merited it ! Yet the phrase, merits of Christ, is not to be found in the New Testament. It is fully admitted, that the merits of Christ stand very high with respect to us ; we owe him the warmest gratitude and praise, as the medium by which all the blessings of grace and salvation are communicated to us ; the favour which he manifested to us was great indeed : though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich ; he sacrificed his own life to effect our salvation, and he still lives to carry on the work ; but, however great his merits with respect to us, however great the obligations we are under to him, he never claimed any thing of the Father, either for himself or sinners, on the ground of his merits, but received every thing as a free gift. His apostles never mentioned his having merited any thing at the hand of God, either for himself or others ; but, on the contrary, they ascribe every thing he hath received, and every blessing he bestows, to the gift of his Father ; which is incompatible with

the doctrine of satisfaction. Our opponents talk much of the merits of the death of Christ, as the only ground on which sinners have a right to expect salvation ; and they sing,

‘ ’Tis by the merits of his death
 ‘ The Father smiles again ;’

as if God would have been eternally frowning upon the world if Christ by his dying groans had not appeased his wrath, and induced him to smile on his own works. The merit of Christ’s death must be human merit ; for it was the man Jesus who died. Many of our opponents admit that it was the man, or human nature only, that died. They contend that the same nature that sinned must make satisfaction for sin ; but it was human nature only that sinned. The merits of his death could only be the merits of him, or that which died, which is acknowledged, even by our opponents, to be merely human ; for, after all they say about the godhead of Christ, they acknowledge that the godhead could neither suffer nor die. Hence it appears that the merit of Christ’s death is, even on the ground of our opponents, human merit ; and it is by his death, they suppose, he made satisfaction for sins : it follows that the satisfaction scheme changes the doctrine of salvation by grace for that of salvation by human merit.

22. We are commanded to forgive others as God hath forgiven us ; but what should we think

of the christian who should determine to keep his insolvent brother in prison until some one in his stead had satisfied every demand he had upon him ! should we not say he acted very unlike a christian ? Yet, if the doctrine of satisfaction be true, this is what he is commanded to do ; for, according to that doctrine, God, whom we are commanded to imitate, never remits a debt until he has received full payment. Alas, how frequently have men ascribed to God what they would condemn in a fellow creature ! If we freely forgive others, and pray that God would as freely forgive us, which Christ hath directed us to do, either we greatly err in following his direction, or the doctrine of satisfaction must be unscriptural.

23. If it be true that pardon and salvation come to us in 'the way of a contract, or bargain,' and that Christ hath fulfilled the conditions of the contract for us, by making satisfaction for our sins, it is difficult to say what need there can be for us to pray for pardon and salvation. God is too just to fail in making good his part of the agreement. Our right to deliverance is founded in strict justice, if Christ bought and paid for it by discharging all we owed ; and, in that case, it may be claimed, on the ground of justice ; there seems no need to supplicate for it, on the ground of mercy, if nothing be left to the discretion of divine mercy, but every thing settled by a compact, founded on principles of rigid justice. Thus the doctrine of satisfaction would supercede the prayers of the penitent, and make God our debtor, in the article of

salvation, on the ground of value received, on our behalf, at the hands of Christ. It would also greatly lessen the gratitude we owe to God for pardon and salvation. We should owe unspeakable gratitude to Christ, for paying all we owed, for bearing all the penalties we had incurred ; but, as the justice of God would remit nothing, as he would cancel nothing that we owed, nor pass by a single offence, until full payment had been made, our gratitude to him in the business would be limited to one point, to his providing a person to pay the debt. Surely a doctrine which would so greatly limit the sphere of prayer and praise to the Almighty must be false.

24. The doctrine of satisfaction has a licentious tendency. Far be it from me to charge all who believe it with being immoral; for I firmly believe many of its advocates to be men of steady piety and virtue : this however is not to be attributed to their belief of that doctrine, but to the firm hold which principles of virtue and piety have of their hearts, by which the pernicious tendency of it is counteracted. I fully grant that the advocates for the satisfaction scheme, do not perceive its vicious tendency; if they did, I believe, they would abandon it : yet I fear there are many who dare not impartially examine that scheme, lest they should be led to doubt its truth, and if they once doubted its truth they would be very uneasy, and much dissatisfied with themselves : this proves that by believing it their consciences are lulled, and they led to rest satisfied with their present state, though

conscious to themselves that they are not altogether what they ought to be. A doctrine which leads men to think all their evil actions were imputed to Christ, and atoned and satisfied for by him, must greatly weaken the restraints, which check them when about to act wrong, arising from a sense of personal responsibility. If a man once believe that he may become perfectly righteous in the sight of God, independent of his acting right, by the righteousness of another being imputed to him, and this is what the doctrine I oppose supposes, a sense of the necessity of personal righteousness must be greatly weakened, if not entirely destroyed. A doctrine which teaches that one person may obey in the place and stead of another, and that his obedience may stand to the account of him who has never personally obeyed, as much so as if he had performed it himself, dissolves every moral obligation. Again, a doctrine which teaches that one man becomes responsible for the sins of another, and suffers all their consequences in the place and stead of him who committed them, and that the actual sinner is on this ground exonerated from guilt and punishment, destroys personal responsibility. Further, a doctrine which teaches that a sinner is made perfectly righteous, and viewed by God as a righteous person, by the righteousness of another being made over to him, prior to his becoming personally righteous in his spirit and conduct, renders personal righteousness unnecessary, in order to our standing righteous in the sight of God. All these things the doc-

trine of satisfaction teacheth. It is left to the candid reader to determine whether a doctrine which dissolves every moral obligation, destroys personal responsibility, and renders personal righteousness unnecessary in order to our acceptance with God, can fail to have a licentious tendency.

Finally. The satisfaction scheme attributes to God what would be deemed vicious and criminal in men. It supposes him to give his creatures a law which none of them could perfectly obey, at least since Adam first sinned; that he notwithstanding condemns and curses them for not perfectly obeying it, and that he would spare sinners only on the ground of the innocent Jesus bearing the penalties of this impracticable law in their place and stead:—that God himself plotted and contrived the death of his beloved Son, who always did those things which pleased him, that he turned all his wrath against him, and slew him with his vengeful sword. It makes God unreasonable in his demands; by representing him as requiring what is impracticable, and punishing for the non-performance of it. It describes him as plotting, and spending his eternal thoughts about, what nothing but the wickedness of men could copy out and execute. If the treatment which Christ received at the hands of the Jews be justly execrated, how much more execrable must it appear to plot and decree all they did, to be the author of what they were only the instruments! how horrible to ascribe such a diabolical plot to the Father of mercies, and make him the prime author and agent of all the

cruel treatment his Son received ! Further, it supposes God to do what is declared an abomination to him, what would be a breach of his own law, i. e. to condemn and slay the innocent. It supposes the infinite Father of mercies to slaughter his own innocent and obedient child. What should we think of that father, who, being full of wrath, and brandishing his sword against those who had offended, because his innocent and obedient son, from the most virtuous and generous principles, stepped between him and them, should plunge it in *his heart*, and vent all the fury of his indignation upon *him* ? Would you not shudder at the view of such a character ? Yet this is the light in which the notion of satisfaction for sins places the divine character. The eternal principles of justice and goodness are invariably the same, at all times, in all places, and in all beings. That cannot, in the nature of things, be just and good in one being which would be unjust and evil in another. If that could be just and good in God which would be unjust and evil in men, he would cease to be a fit object of imitation to his creatures ; but the highest point at which a creature can aim is to be like God : in him every thing we, upon the most correct principles, call just, good, and excellent, must exist in infinite perfection ; and every thing that would be unjust and evil in creatures must be alien, and infinitely distant from him : it follows that a doctrine which imputes to the Almighty what would stamp infamy on the character of a frail man cannot be true.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to point out the contradictions and absurdities involved in the doctrine of satisfaction, the consequences to which it leads, and to place it before the reader, as represented by its professed advocates, in its various tendencies, and bearings against reason and scripture. I do not charge the consequences involved in this doctrine upon those who maintain it; I expect they will not admit them; I charge only the doctrine upon them; this they receive as true; and the consequences involved I charge upon the doctrine. I appeal to the unbiassed reader whether it do not involve every thing I have charged upon it. I have used no arguments but what I think fair and just; that either their fairness or force will be admitted by those who are determined, at all events, to retain the notions against which they are directed, I do not expect; but I hope they may be thought of some weight by those who are disposed to enquire after truth, who are not afraid to re-examine what they have already believed, and who are willing to attend to evidence on both sides an important question. From the bigoted devotees of a system I expect nothing but censure and reproach; but from the candid and liberal I hope to obtain, at least, a fair hearing. If my arguments be weak and pointless, they may be borne with the more patience, there will be the less reason for those who espouse the doctrine I oppose to be alarmed and angry on the occasion, and it certainly will be the more easy to refute them. If any person, who thinks the doctrine of satisfaction

a fundamental article of christian faith, can, and will, fairly answer the arguments contained in this chapter, he shall have my thanks ; I will lay aside my objections to that doctrine, and quit the ground on which I now stand. Truth is the only object worth pursuing, and let it be followed, on whatever side it may appear, or to wherever it may lead. If the arguments I have constructed should alarm the advocates for the doctrine against which I plead, if they show themselves angry on the occasion, use what means they can to keep persons from attending to and examining what I have said, and load the person who has dared to attack one of their favourite tenets with censure and reproach, I shall consider this as a fresh proof of the vulnerability of their cause, and conceive that I have made some impressions on the lines of reputed orthodoxy.

On one point I would add a remark here. I know our opponents will cry out that they do not deny either the mercy of God, or the doctrine of free grace, or the free forgiveness of sins, or the propriety of the prayers of the penitent ; but that they steadily maintain these things. It is readily granted that they do not *professedly* deny, but maintain these things ; yet it is contended that their favourite tenet of satisfaction is incompatible with them : this is all that is asserted in the preceding arguments ; and, until this can be disproved, their system stands charged with many contradictions, and they with maintaining a doc-

trine inimical to the system of free grace displayed in the gospel.

CHAPTER THIRD.

An attempt to account for the rise of the Doctrine of Satisfaction among Christians, and its continuance to the present day.

IT may be asked, if the doctrine of satisfaction be without foundation in scripture, how are we to account for its rise and continuance? To answer this enquiry is the design of the present chapter. It is very evident that christianity has for ages been grossly corrupted, both in doctrine and worship: and, as the above doctrine is not only without foundation in the gospel, but opposed to the whole tenor of it, it must be reckoned among the corruptions of christianity. Its rise and continuance may be accounted for on the same general principles.

1. A dereliction of virtue and moral excellence has in all ages been too prevalent; and men have been desirous of finding some succedaneum for personal rectitude and obedience to the will of God. The man habituated to vicious courses, and hackneyed in the ways of sin, cannot easily be brought to think that the safety of his state wholly depends on an entire renovation of heart and life. To believe a dogma is more easy than to make a

new heart. No difficulty attends the exciting of sudden impulses, and warm feelings, in comparison of what attends the production of new principles and habits. For a person to work up his mind to a persuasion that he is constituted righteous, by the righteousness of another being imputed to him, is a less irksome mode of getting rid of the remonstrances, reproaches, and scruples of conscience, than by sincere repentance and newness of life. For a man to be told that he has nothing to do but to believe that Christ hath done all things for him; or, that nothing is necessary to place him in a safe state, in the sight of God, but to believe that Christ died for him; or, that his disclaiming all pretension to personal righteousness, and trusting entirely to the righteousness of Christ for his salvation, will make him a christian, and constitute him an heir of glory; will ever suit the indolent soul, and be to the taste of the slaves of vice, when they feel themselves goaded by conscience. It is like the road which an ancient king wished to find to geometry; it leads at once to the object sought, without any conflict, pains, or exertions; but then it leads to it only in imagination. Can we wonder that, among all the other corruptions of christianity, the doctrine of satisfaction should be introduced, which is so favourable to moral inactivity, and which teaches that men are made perfectly righteous, by the righteousness of another being imputed to them, even before they begin to do right? Men have ever been seeking an impunity in vice, and an exemption

from the rigid prescriptions of unbending virtue: in this doctrine they find such impunity and exemption; for it teaches that a substitute bore all their punishment, and that a substitute wrought out a perfect righteousness for them. From the known disposition of mankind to obtain peace of conscience, while destitute of strict conformity to the will of God, we may account for the rise and continuance of this doctrine.

2. In all ages, men have greatly erred in their thoughts of the divine character; they have been too apt to think God, in some sense, such a one as themselves. Mistakes of this kind have tended much to promote the doctrine in question. The following short tale may serve both to illustrate the doctrine I oppose, and help us to account for its prevalence among the professors of the gospel. A certain man lives in a splendid mansion, he is possessed of a large estate, he has much property besides his estate, and is the most powerful man in his neighbourhood. On one corner of his estate stands a humble cottage, inhabited by a poor defenceless peasant, who is wholly dependent on him, and under his authority. The rich man has in his garden a tree laden with fruit: the poor man, happening to observe this tree, ventures to taste of the fruit: the rich man sees him do this, and becomes very angry, threatens him with the utmost rigour of the law, declares his determination to turn him out of the cottage, and ruin both him and his family. The poor man laments his fate, he acknowledges that he did wrong in touching the

fruit; but cannot appease the anger of his lord. Whilst he is deploring his hard case, one of the servants reminds him that his lordship has a son, a very amiable, compassionate youth, that he has great influence with the old gentleman, and that he would sooner risk his father's displeasure than omit a benevolent action. The poor man commits his cause to the son, who interposes in his favour, appeases his father's wrath, and the matter is amicably settled. In some such light have many conceived of the character of God and the mediation of Jesus Christ. Their ideas have been evidently borrowed from what they have observed to take place among men: from a wrong notion that the ways of God resemble those of men. Its being very general for persons to reason from men and their ways to God and his ways, accounts, in some measure, for the prevalence of the notion of satisfaction for sins: nor is it improbable that the transferring of human feelings to the Deity, and borrowing ideas of his government from what was observed to take place among mankind, helped to give rise to that notion.

3. We know that opinions which have been long received, and have obtained a general currency in the world, do not soon lose their influence. Though those who have entertained them should become acquainted with new facts, and receive many new ideas, they would be in danger of intermingling with them, in whole or in part, some of their old opinions. It is probable this was the case with the gentiles when they received the pro-

fession of the gospel. It is a clear fact that some of the errors of paganism, and the gentile philosophy, were early brought into the christian system, and that, in process of time, christianity was much heathenized. The heathen conceived of their gods as subject to anger and wrath, as sometimes becoming vindictive, and that they might be appeased, and rendered favourable, by gifts and sacrifices. These heathen notions were at length grafted upon the gospel, and received as a part of christian truth. The vicinity of pagan neighbours might help forward this corruption, by a misconception among christians that what was spurious in the old superstition was a reality in the true religion. —When christianity became the religion of the empire, pains were soon taken to make the christian church bear a strong resemblance to the pagan hierarchy, and to make the religion of Jesus as much as possible to the heathen taste; hence much of paganism was infused into it. The ignominious death of Christ had long been a stumbling block, and a rock of offence, which christians had discovered a disposition as much as possible to remove; to represent it as vicarious, and as literally the price of our salvation, was doing it effectually. The pagans valued their sacrifices as the means of procuring the favour of their gods; and to represent the dying Jesus as an expiatory sacrifice, by which the favour of the true God was procured, was obviating at once their objection to christianity founded upon his shameful death. The gospel was greatly corrupted in some other

points before the notion of the death of Christ being vicarious was thought of among christians. In such circumstances the doctrine of satisfaction arose, and, no doubt, they greatly tended to its rise.

4. The Jews, though their law knew nothing of vicarious sacrifices, frequently manifested a disposition to substitute their sacrifices, and ritual service, in the place of moral purity and holiness. They sometimes degenerated so far as to suppose that, if their altars were but heaped with their bleeding and smoking victims, they must be acceptable to God, and secure of his favour. Though frequently reprov'd by the prophets of the LORD, they were not easily recovered from this error. We have only to suppose the same error, in reference to what Christ had done and suffered, to make its way among christians, as they degenerated from the purity and simplicity of the gospel ; and, after having begun to trust to what he had done, instead of doing what he had taught, it is easy to conceive, how they would go on in a train of false reasoning, their want of moral rectitude prompting them, until at length they conceived his death to be vicarious, and his righteousness transferable to them ; and, when once such an idea was conceived, it would not be easily eradicated.

5. It should be remembered that the apostles were Jews, and had much to do with the Jewish people throughout the whole of their ministry. The idioms of their vernacular language would naturally occur in their preaching and writings :

it would be a matter of course for them to make frequent use of Jewish forms of expression, and accommodate them to the subjects treated of in the New Testament. They would do this the rather as they aimed at displaying the superior benefits of the gospel, when contrasting it with the legal dispensation, in order to weaken the attachment of the Jews to the institutions of Moses: hence they would sometimes use Jewish forms of expression in a figurative sense, to render the comparison between the law and gospel the more striking. From a careful examination of the apostolic writings it will appear, that what is here supposed was really the fact. When the peculiar circumstances of the apostles were forgotten, especially in nations habituated to a less figurative style, their language would be misconstrued, what at first was merely an allusion would be viewed as a literal circumstance; and, gradually, legal forms of expression would acquire a meaning, among christians, which they did not bear, even under the law. Thus phrases which had been applied figuratively to Christ and his death, at length, by a rigid literal construction, were taken to express a vicarious sacrifice, an atonement of the wrath of God, an expiation of sin. The rise of the doctrine of satisfaction, among christians, may be accounted for on the foregoing principles.

In the preceding observations, I have attempted to show that the existence of the doctrine I oppose may be accounted for, without supposing it to have any foundation in scripture. I proceed now

to a more particular examination of some of those figurative expressions, in the sacred writings, the abuse of which gave rise to the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sin.

1. *The wrath of God.*

This is often mentioned in the Old Testament, and a few times in the New; but we never read of wrath *in* God, or that his nature is wrathful: on the contrary, the declarations of scripture prove that wrath can have no place in him, that nothing wrathful exists in his nature. He hath said, *fury is not in me.* GOD IS LOVE. He is *the Lord God, merciful and gracious.* Mercy and grace stand opposed to wrath. That nature which is love can have nothing wrathful in it; for wrath and love are direct contraries. A being in whom there is no fury cannot be wrathful and vindictive. Had wrath ever existed in God, in him it must have eternally remained; because he is unchangeable. When the wrath of God is spoken of, it cannot mean a passion which affects his infinite mind; for he is not subject to passions as we are. To suppose the sins of men capable of agitating the *Eternal* on his throne, by raising in him the passion of anger, is to ascribe omnipotence to sin, to suppose its influence extends to the Deity, and that the Almighty is, in some respect, dependent on his creatures for the feelings which exist in his changeless mind. To feel wrath is incompatible with perfect peace and happiness; but God hath

ever been, and must ever remain, the very God of peace, the ever blessed, or happy, God ; consequently it is impossible he should ever have felt anger, or wrath. The phrase, wrath of God, must be figurative ; because not capable of a literal construction, consistently with the infinite excellency of the divine nature. It simply imports the displeasure of God against sin. Properly speaking, it is felt, not in God, but in the creature. It is called the wrath of God because it is a painful feeling produced, in a sinner, by a view of the holiness of God, and an apprehension of his displeasure ; or, because it is excited in the guilty mind by what God hath made known of his will. Strictly, it doth not arise from what God is, but from the apprehension the sinner has of him, associated with his own guilty feelings. Where sin and guilt are not, no feeling of the wrath of God can exist.

Two ideas will be found to express what the phrase, wrath of God, imports, wherever it occurs in scripture. Either it intends a sense of the displeasure of God, resting on the mind of the sinner ; or, it intends the judgments which God inflicts, as a punishment of sin, to excite in the creature a sense of its evil nature. In reference to the former idea, the wrath of God is said to abide on the unbeliever ; i. e. an apprehension of his displeasure is not removed from him. In reference to the latter, when the judgments of God are stayed, or punishment averted, his anger is said to be turned away.

Without construing this phrase, the wrath of God, literally, the thought never could have arisen that it was necessary for Christ to atone, or appease, the divine wrath: and it is by continuing to give too literal a construction to such phrases that the notion of satisfaction is perpetuated. But, as it is evident that wrath, or anger, taken literally, is a passion, it would be as absurd to understand the passages of scripture, which speak of it, in a literal sense, as it would those which mention the heart, eyes, ears, hands, and feet of the Almighty.

2. *God's being pacified.*

This is once mentioned in the Old Testament; Ezek. xvi. 63. but the expression is evidently highly figurative: to suppose the contrary would be to form a very gross idea of the Deity. Whatever may be meant by God's being pacified, it is not the death of his Son that is said to pacify him; nor is the time when he is said to be pacified the time of Christ's crucifixion; but the period when the punishment of the Jews shall have terminated, and they be restored and made happy. It evidently intends the turning away of his anger, in the sense given above, i. e. the cessation of the divine judgments upon that people. Yet by a too literal construction of this, and somewhat similar forms of expression, what a noise has been made, for ages, among christians, about Christ's pacifying the anger of God!

3. *The term bought, as applied to what Christ hath done for sinners.*

1 Cor. vii. 23. Christians are said to be bought with a price. 2 Pet. ii. 1. Immoral professors of the gospel are said to deny the Lord that bought them. This language, taken literally, would place christian redemption before us in the light of a bargain, of sale, purchase and delivery, of a mere mercantile transaction, and involve the greatest absurdity : yet it was by construing such passages literally that the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sins was first introduced ; and it is by continuing to take them literally that notion is still maintained. The above passages must be taken figuratively, or they cannot be made to agree with the general tenor of the gospel, as a system of divine grace : and if we compare them with other parts of the sacred writings, where similar forms of expression occur, the propriety of understanding them figuratively will be evident. A literal purchase supposes one who sells the thing purchased, as well as one who buys it ; and the buyer gives a valuable consideration, something equivalent, to the seller, for the thing which he buys ; what he buys and pays for he receives as his right, in a fair way of bargain, and every thing of free gift, or free favour, is excluded from the transaction. Christ could not buy sinners literally ; because he received all things at the hands of his Father as a free gift, and the gospel is throughout a system of free grace, or favour ; all its blessings are free gifts ;

nothing like a bargain, or mercantile transaction, appears in any part of it.

Besides, if Christ bought sinners literally, the question will naturally arise, of whom did he buy them? It seems this question did actually arise, when the notion of Christ's making satisfaction for sins was first thought of among christians, and the most general opinion was that Christ paid the price of our redemption to the *devil*. Dr. Priestley observes (in his History of the Corruptions of Christianity), that Origen was clearly of this opinion. 'If,' says Origen*, 'we are bought with a price, as Paul affirms, we must have been bought from some person whose slaves we were, who also demanded what price he pleased, that he might dismiss from his power those which he held. But it was the devil that held us. For to him we had been given over for our sins. Wherefore, he demanded the blood of Christ, as the price of our redemption.' Ambrose says†, 'We were pledged to a bad creditor, for sin. Christ came and offered his blood for us.' Austin says‡, 'The blood of Christ is given as a price, and yet the devil having received it, is not enriched, but bound by it, that we might be delivered from his bonds.' Thus it appears that, when christians began to talk of Christ's buying sinners literally, some distinguished writers among them thought it was of the *devil* he bought them: perhaps, they could not

* Opera, Vol. ii. p. 486.

† Grotii Opera, Vol. iv. p. 344.

‡ Opera, Vol. iii. p. 417.

think of any other way of reconciling their literal construction of the passages we are examining with the scripture doctrine of salvation by grace. If sinners were bought literally, it must be either of God or the devil; to say they were bought of God excludes salvation by his grace; to say they were bought of the devil will shock the feelings of most christians in the present day: there is no way of getting clear of these difficulties but by admitting that the language is figurative. The same, or similar, forms of expression frequently occur in the Old Testament, and are admitted by our opponents to be used figuratively. Deut. xxxii. 6. Israel is reminded that JEHOVAH *bought* them; but of whom did he buy them? what price did he give for them? Who does not see that the expression is figurative, and refers to his bringing them out of Egypt with a mighty arm, and their being acquired to the knowledge and worship of the one true God? So when God delivered them into the hands of their enemies he was said to sell them. 'He *sold* them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia.' Judg. iii. 8. But he did not sell them literally, he received no price for them; it only means that he delivered them into the hands of their oppressors. Again, we read of *buying* the truth; of the people having *sold* themselves for nought, and that they should be redeemed without money; of *buying* without money, and without price. Who does not see that all such forms of expression are figurative? And why should we not construe them in the

same manner when applied to what Christ hath done for our deliverance from sin and its effects ?

In the New Testament also, in several instances, such forms of expression are admitted, by all parties, to be figurative. Rev. iii. 18. Christ saith, ‘ I counsel thee to *buy* of me gold tried in the fire; that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed ;’ but are christians called to buy these things literally ? does Christ sell the blessings of the gospel ? by no means, they are only called to acquire the enjoyment of them. Acts xx. 28. *God* is said to have *pur-chased* the church ; but of whom did *he* purchase it ? surely not of himself : here the expression must be allowed to be figurative, and can only mean that those who believed were become a peculiar treasure, or people, to God. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Christians are said to be God’s property in consequence of their being bought with a price : it follows that God is there considered to be the purchaser ; but had they been bought of him he must have sold them, of course his property in them would have ceased. The blessings of the gospel, and the gifts of the spirit, are, in the context, represented as the price with which they had been bought. The language is figurative ; its meaning seems plain : God had acquired those who believed the gospel as a peculiar people to himself ; he had done this through the gift of his Son, and of the Holy Spirit ; consequently, they were bound to consider themselves as his peculiar property, and to devote themselves entirely to him. Now

as a thing purchased is an acquisition made, and as whatever is given, or done, in order to such acquisition, may be fitly called a price ; the apostle, speaking figuratively, says, ‘ Ye are bought with a price.’ In this way must the language be understood when the Lord is said to have bought sinners.

4. Its being said that Christ gave himself a ransom for us.

This has been construed literally, and understood to mean that he gave his life as an equivalent for our deliverance ; but the word ransom is several times used figuratively in the scriptures. Isa. xliii. 3. It is said to Israel, ‘ I gave Egypt for thy *ransom*, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.’ But was this a literal transaction? To whom did God give the nations mentioned to induce them to deliver up his people when they held them in bondage? All parties admit that the language is figurative, and refers to God’s judgments upon those nations being the means of the deliverance of his people. Pro. xxi. 18. We are told, ‘ The wicked shall be a *ransom* for the righteous ;’ but who ever thought that the wicked were to be given to make satisfaction for the sins of the righteous, or as an equivalent to obtain their deliverance? The plain meaning seems to be, that the destruction of the wicked should free the righteous from the oppressive yoke of the wicked. God hath promised to *ransom* his people from the

power of the grave: Hos. xiii. 14. But this cannot mean that he will give an equivalent to the grave for their liberation; the language is evidently figurative, and means either, that he would preserve them from death, in some particular case in which they were exposed to it, or, that he would raise them again from the dead. In the same figurative sense must the word ransom be understood when applied to the death of Christ; it simply means that he sacrificed his life for the good of men, to effect their deliverance from sin and its effects; not that he gave himself to die in their place and stead. It is never said that Christ gave himself to the Father as a ransom price for sinners to deliver them from the hand of his justice; on the contrary, God is, several times, said to give the price, to give his Son for our redemption; it means that he gave him to be a saviour, to effect every thing necessary for our salvation.

What I have noticed seem to be the principal forms of expression in scripture, upon a literal construction of which the notion of satisfaction for sins has been founded. Other passages of scripture, offices and relations ascribed to Christ, will be noticed in another part of this work. I next observe that the doctrine I oppose has derived considerable support from wrong notions of sin, and of the person of Christ.

It has been said that sin is an infinite evil, deserving infinite punishment; that, consequently, none but an infinite being could atone, or make satisfaction for it. But how can it be proved that

sin is an infinite evil, seeing it is the act and deed of a finite being? To perform infinite actions requires infinite power; for no creature can act beyond his strength: it follows that sin cannot be infinite, because the act of a finite creature. If sin were infinite, there could be no degrees in it, every evil action would be of equal turpitude; for there can be no degrees in what is infinite. If the evil actions of men were infinite, they would be capable of performing actions infinitely good; for the same powers which, when exercised wrong, produce infinite evil, when exercised aright, would, of course, produce infinite good. If sin be not infinite it cannot deserve infinite punishment; nor require an infinite person to atone, or make satisfaction for it. But it is argued that sin is committed against an infinite being, and therefore it must be an infinite evil, and of infinite demerit; if so, right actions, when performed from right motives, should be infinitely good, and deserve an infinite reward, because they have the pleasing an infinite being for their object; but actions take their denomination from the character of the person who performs them, not from that of him in obedience or disobedience to whom they are done. Hence it is evident the actions of finite beings never can be infinite.

It is probable that wrong notions of the person of Christ helped to give rise to the doctrine of satisfaction: certain it is that such notions have had a great influence in perpetuating it among christians. When it was once conceived that Christ

was a second person in the trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and not a creature to whom God had given existence, it would be difficult to conceive how he could owe any obedience to the Father, or what room there could be for him to obey on his own account. The idea of his obeying and suffering in the place and stead of others might be thought a fit expedient to account for the imagined incarnation, obedience, and death of a being who was supposed every way equal with the Almighty. As such notions of the person of Christ are altogether unscriptural, it is likely the conclusions to which they would lead would be very erroneous. Under another view, on the supposition of Christ's being the supreme and self-existent God, the notion of satisfaction would involve the most manifest absurdity; it would involve the supposition that God sent himself into the world, imputed the sins of men to himself, punished himself for them, poured out all his wrath upon himself, appeased his own anger, and made himself, by the satisfaction he gave to his own justice, 'well-willing,' and merciful to creatures. Or, according to the unintelligible distinctions of trinitarians, it would involve the idea, that one divine person in the trinity satisfied the justice, and appeased the wrath of another; but if the Son satisfied the justice of the Father, and appeased him, who was to satisfy the justice of the Son and Holy Spirit, and appease them? for all the three persons being imagined equal, in every sense, the justice of each must equally have needed satisfaction. Whatever

absurdities such a system may involve, when it is remembered how soon after the apostolic age the doctrine of the unity of God, and the humanity of Christ, began to be corrupted, it may justly be conceived, as one error very frequently generates another, that the minds of christians were prepared for the doctrine of satisfaction by the mistakes into which they had already fallen respecting the person of Christ ; it seldom happens that the mind is set right respecting the former only as it is rightly informed respecting the latter.

The popular notion of Christ's making atonement, for sin, by enduring the wrath of God due to sinners, and so satisfying divine justice on their behalf, like most other corruptions of christianity, sprung up gradually, and ages elapsed before it was brought to maturity. To trace the progress of this corruption of the gospel way of salvation, from first to last, would be attended with considerable difficulty : several things however may be ascertained respecting it.

1. It appears that the apostolic fathers, the next writers to the apostles in order of time, had no idea of Christ's having made satisfaction for sin ; they did not use the phraseology of after ages when treating of his death, but contented themselves with speaking after the manner of the writers of the New Testament : had they been of the same opinion with the reputed orthodox of modern times, it is very likely they would have used similar forms of expression. On the contrary, they used language very incompatible with the modern

notion of atonement. They talked of God's being appeased by repentance and prayer, exhorted sinners to cast themselves on the divine mercy, and recommended them to learn how much a pure and holy charity avails with him. They represented, not the sacrifice of Christ, but of a broken and a contrite heart, and of moral virtue, as being substituted in the place of the legal sacrifices.

2. Though the notion of Christ's satisfying divine justice for the sins of men, is now thought by many a fundamental doctrine of christianity, it is never introduced as an article of christian faith, in any ancient summary of christian doctrine. Had those who wrote apologies for the christians, and gave accounts of the principal articles of christian faith, thought on this point as many do in the present day, and supposed it to be of the importance it is now made, it cannot be thought they would have been totally silent on the subject: yet, it seems, this was the case.

3. For several ages, christian writers not only remained silent respecting Christ's having appeased the wrath of God and satisfied his justice, they expressed themselves in a manner quite inconsistent with that opinion. They spoke of the death of Christ as necessary to complete his example, as an accomplishment of prophecy, and as an illustration and confirmation of his doctrine. They spoke of the end for which he came in the flesh, as being, that he might set us an example of living, and dying, and rising again: that none who neglected to do the will of God might alledge in

their excuse the weakness of the flesh: that in his passion he showed what we ought to endure; in his resurrection, what we are to hope for. Again, they talked of satisfaction being made to God by good works, and of sins being done away by the merit of compassion: of God's forgiving sinners on the ground of their repentance, as a father forgives his children: of gentleness of mind, an innocent life, and good works, being the sacrifices of God: of the blood of martyrdom, and personal sufferings, being accepted as a purification, and price of redemption: of some being redeemed by the blood of the martyrs. Further, they asserted, that we are not to suppose that the curse of God lies against Christ: that, though he endured the curses of men, he is not to be viewed as accursed: that he was subjected to the passions of the flesh, that he might teach virtue and patience, not by words only, but also by actions. These things are very inconsistent with the doctrine of satisfaction; yet such seems to have been the state of opinions, among christians, at least down to the time of Austin. Need we wonder then that some reputed orthodox men have charged the *ancients* with speaking *meagrely* of the satisfaction of Christ, and giving much to good works? or at their complaining of the imperfect knowledge which the primitive christian writers had of the christian system in this respect? But such charges and complaints only prove that the popular notion of atonement is, comparatively, novel,

and was not admitted in the early ages of the church.

4. During the period I have referred to, controversies were started, and parties arose among christians, who denied that Christ actually died; such as the docetæ, the gnosticks, and the manicheans. These, not admitting the reality of his death, could not believe that Christ became a vicarious sacrifice. Other christians, who maintained the reality of the death of Christ, wrote against them. Had the orthodox defenders of the faith on this subject thought, like the reputed orthodox of modern times, that unless Christ had died, justice could not have been satisfied, nor sinners saved, it is natural to suppose they would have used this as an argument to prove the necessity of his death; yet this was not done by Irenæus, or others, who wrote largely against the docetæ, and the gnosticks; nor even by Austin, when writing against the manicheans. A defender of modern orthodoxy would certainly have contended that, by denying the death of Christ, his atonement was set aside, and the salvation of men rendered impossible. That the *ancients* used no such arguments is a proof that their opinions were different.

5. After christians began to deviate from the simplicity of the gospel, respecting the nature and design of the death of Christ, and the embryo of the modern doctrine of atonement was formed, by a literal construction of the figurative language of scripture, ages elapsed before the idea was generally admitted that Christ endured the torments of

hell, suffered the wrath of God, and satisfied his justice for the personal sins of men. For a long time it was supposed the price of redemption was paid to the devil, not to God : that Christ's dying instead of men was simply to put an end to their mortality, to recover them from death to a state of immortality : and that the price was paid by God himself. By degrees, however, something like the modern notion of satisfaction obtained before the time of the reformation. About two centuries and a half after Austin, Gregory the great, who was the most considerable writer in his time, insisted upon the necessity of some expiation ; yet he admitted that our redemption might have been effected by Christ in some other way than by his death. This shows that he did not suppose a satisfaction to divine justice absolutely necessary in order to the salvation of sinners. Theodorus Abucara, a Greek writer of the ninth century, expressed something more like the modern opinion ; he asserted, that God, by his just judgments, demanded of us all things that are written in the law ; and that when we could not pay, the Lord paid for us, taking upon himself the curse and condemnation to which we were obnoxious. So late as the eleventh century the popular notion of atonement seems not to have been fully admitted in the Latin church ; for Anselm, one of the greatest theologians in that age, though he contended that it was necessary Christ should pay, what for sin man owed to God, admitted that, of innumerable other methods by which God might have saved men,

he chose the death of his Son. In the next century, if we may judge from Bernard, the doctrine of satisfaction began to be pretty well established among the Latins; for he speaks of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, in the reputed orthodox way, and of the satisfaction of one being imputed to all; yet he argues that sin may be forgiven by the power of the divinity, as a man can forgive an offence against himself. Afterwards appeared Thomas Aquinas, who became a kind of oracle in the Latin church, and his doctrine seems to have been that which was most generally received in it, and retained till the time of the reformation. He speaks of a man as a debtor to God as a judge, in consequence of sin, and to the devil as a tormentor: and that with respect to God, justice required that man should be redeemed, but not with respect to the devil; so that Christ paid his blood to God, and not to the devil. Though he admits that it was not naturally impossible for God to be reconciled to man without the death of Christ, and that he might have remitted the sins of men by his mere will; yet he evidently speaks of the death of Christ as that which reconciles God to men, and of his taking away the punishment of sin as a man making satisfaction to God*. It may be presum-

* See Dr. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, part 2, of which I have made considerable use in this chap. The reader will there find a good history of the doctrine of atonement, supported by authorities.

ed that such continued to be the doctrine of the church of Rome till the time of the reformation.

On the whole, it appears that the doctrine of satisfaction was invented long after the times of the apostles : that it began to be conceived at a time when metaphysical disquisitions led men away from the simplicity of the gospel, that it grew up amidst the darkness of the middle ages, and was brought to full maturity by the reformers.

The derivation of this doctrine to the protestant churches was evidently from the church of Rome, though, perhaps, not in every circumstance the same as it became in the hands of the reformers. The Romanists had connected with the merits of Christ, those of his mother, and of the saints : these the reformers separated, and ascribed every thing to the merits of Christ. The doctrine of merit had taken deep root, every right idea of the grace of God seemed lost ; it was supposed that some inducement must be presented to the Almighty in order to his forgiving sins, and communicating his favour to men. Wrong notions of divine justice had obtained, christianity had in a great measure been converted into a system of terror, and the God of love concealed from his creatures by the gloomy superstition of the times. The reformers did not suspect that the doctrine of merit was wrong, while the notion of merit was limited to what Christ had done. They did not question the received opinion of the person of Christ, and conceiving him to be God, it was not easy to conceive he could owe any obedience to

the Father on his own account : hence it would be natural for them to suppose that he obeyed in the place and stead of others, and that his righteousness was transferable. With the utmost propriety they opposed the sale of indulgences, and the notion of the supererogatory works of the saints, which were supposed to be transferable to others, and to be set up to their account; but they did not consider that they proceeded on the same principle, when they represented the whole of the obedience of Christ as supererogatory, and his righteousness as transferable to sinners, and set up to the account of all who believe : they did not consider that to tell sinners that Christ had borne all their punishment in their place and stead, and that they had nothing to do but believe it, in order to God's accounting them righteous, was vending indulgences at a cheaper rate than the pope's agents sold them. While they opposed the popish application of a false principle, they retained the principle, without suspecting the fallacy of it, they still supposed that one man might be accepted with God for the merit of another, and the righteousness of one be reckoned to another. It did not occur to them that no inducement could be necessary to render God propitious, and favourable to his creatures, and that it was as much a contradiction to the gospel system of free grace to suppose Christ had merited salvation for sinners, as to suppose the saints had merited it. They suspected not the common notions of divine justice, which represented the Father of mercies as a vindictive

being, were erroneous; hence they supposed that, though the popish methods of rendering God favourable were absurd, he must be placated by some one, and they ascribed the whole work to Christ. They could not at once divest christianity of those terrors which had been entwined with it; nor see the infinite love and mercifulness of God through all the gloom which superstition had raised around them. Men can only reason from those principles they are acquainted with: the reformers seem not to have been acquainted with the freeness of the divine favour as displayed in the gospel; but they had heard much of the merit of Christ, and of the saints; with the latter they were much disgusted; they determined to expunge it, for they perceived its absurdity and immoral uses; but no method of doing this occurred to them, but that of setting merit in opposition to merit, the merit of Christ in opposition to the supposed merit of the saints: hence they undervalued all good works, and directed men to build all their hopes of happiness on the perfect satisfaction of Christ. They had been educated in the church of Rome, they had grown up in the belief of its doctrines, nothing presented itself to lead them to question the truth of many of them; they set themselves about reforming what they perceived to be abuses, the rest they retained. It was not to be expected they should see through such a complicated mass of errors at once; and the doctrines they retained when they began the reformation they could seldom bear to hear questioned af-

terwards, when they presided at the head of different churches.

On the whole, the reformers did as much as might be expected, considering the circumstances in which they were placed, and the disadvantages under which they laboured. A few objects engrossed their chief attention, these called for continual study and exertion, they had not leisure for the examination of every subject: of course they left many things nearly as they found them. That they retained the notion of satisfaction for sins, is the less surprising, when their views upon other subjects are considered. Their belief of the doctrine of the trinity, of original sin, of absolute predestination, and the improper views they retained of the divine character, together with their notion of the infinite demerit of sin, would confirm them in the supposition that the wrath of God must be appeased, and the sins of men atoned for, before they could be forgiven. It could not be expected that errors which had been accumulating for many ages should be all detected at once, or removed in a single age. We blame not the reformers, but those who, instead of going forward with the work of reformation, are determined to believe whatever they believed, without duly enquiring whether it be true or false.

It should also be remembered that several of the reformers were much attached to the writings of the later fathers, especially those of Austin. Luther had been a friar of the order which bore the name, and he was much conversant with the writ-

ings of Austin : as he leaned to his notions of grace, original sin, and predestination, so he would be likely to build much upon the passages in his writings which favoured the doctrine of satisfaction. Being of a sanguine turn, and finding this doctrine suit his purposes so well, in his contests with the papists, he would be likely to carry it much further than it had been carried before. This was evidently the case with him and others of the reformers : and it is accounted for by considering the circumstances in which they lived, the nature of the contest in which they were engaged with the Romanists, the modes of reasoning to which they had been habituated, and the ancient writers to whom they were most attached.

Thus it appears that the doctrine of satisfaction in substance, came with the reformers out of the church of Rome, that they enlarged upon the subject, and carried to the utmost length the absurd notions of other times, respecting the vindictiveness of God, and the necessity of an atonement to appease his wrath, and render him propitious to sinners.

The doctrine of satisfaction being maintained by the reformers, was adopted by the protestant churches, and soon became established as an article of faith among them : being once adopted, it is not difficult to account for its continuance to the present time.

1. The pious labours, and eminent usefulness of the reformers, not only excited the veneration of their cotemporaries, but have commanded the

respect of posterity, nor ought their services ever to be forgotten. They by a noble daring, with a firmness of character, a fearlessness of suffering, and an ardent zeal, worthy the cause of virtue and religion, broke from religious bondage, cast the papal yoke from their necks, and began to stem the torrent of abuses which had long deluged the christian world. They emancipated nations from the yoke of a foreign ecclesiastical despot, tore the veil of popish superstition which blinded their eyes, brought the scriptures to public view, and did much towards making mankind free, virtuous, and happy. But they were fallible men, they had their mistakes, they pushed some things to extremes, and had but a very imperfect knowledge of christian liberty: hence they thought it right to frame new creeds and articles of faith, to give a permanency to their opinions, which were formed in the heat of controversy, and amidst a variety of agitating circumstances. The opinions they formed would naturally have a great and long continued influence. Men, in all ages, have been too much disposed to take things for granted, and to shrink from the labour of close investigation. To question the opinions of eminently great and celebrated men requires more strength of mind than christians in general have possessed. With veneration for the character and labours of the reformers has been blended a too blind veneration for whatever they maintained as christian doctrines. This has greatly tended to check freedom of enquiry on religious subjects, and to perpetuate many errors

among christians, and among the rest the doctrine of satisfaction.

2. The puritans were a new set of reformers ; but their views of reformation were restricted chiefly to matters of church discipline. The doctrines which had been all along believed by the generality of protestants they esteemed sacred ; in particular they were zealous for the doctrine of satisfaction. Their eminent piety, patience in suffering, and numerous writings, which are still read by many of the reputed orthodox, have excited much deserved respect.—The respect in which the puritans have justly been held, has produced an undue deference to their opinions ; and their writings are by many regarded as a kind of standard of orthodoxy. This is another circumstance which has helped to perpetuate the doctrine in question.

3. Many of the dissenting churches were originally formed by the puritans. This helped to perpetuate the influence of their writings, opinions, and names. From generation to generation the doctrines they believed have been instilled into the infant mind, by the use of catechisms fraught with their peculiar sentiments, before reason had attained strength to discern between truth and error : and it is well known that great difficulty attends the eradication of early prejudices. Though the dissenters have not written creeds, to be subscribed as a term of communion, yet, too generally, those called orthodox, have a creed, or system of notions, an acquiescence in which is understood

to be an essential term of communion : and a leading article in their creed is the popular notion of atonement, to doubt which is deemed heresy, and to oppose it involves excommunication. These things considered, the reader will not be at a loss to account for the continuance of that notion among the reputed orthodox dissenters.

4. The doctrine of satisfaction being made an article of the established faith, and interwoven with the service of the national church, it is supported by law, upheld by the strong arm of power, and perpetuated by act of parliament. Besides, the honours and emoluments of the established church are restricted to those who believe the articles, and can perform the service, in which it is included. The consideration of this will help much in accounting for its prevalence.

5. Since the time this doctrine was brought to maturity, there have not been wanting men of learning and piety, who have seen its absurdity, and shown themselves ready to refute it. Faustus Socinus rejected it; but for doing so his name is to this day covered with reproach by the pretended orthodox; they charge him with denying redemption by Christ, than which no charge can be more unfounded; for he says, ‘ We are saved however from the punishment of our sins by Christ, because, by his great power in heaven and earth, he brings it about that no punishment can reach us; and by the same power he will accomplish our entire and perpetual freedom from death,

which is the wages of sin, and its principal and peculiar punishment. But this method of rescuing us from the punishment of our sins is very different from that which implies a satisfaction for them. No two things can be more repugnant to each other than freedom of pardon and satisfaction. Indeed, no man of judgment and piety ought to entertain the idea of satisfaction for sin; since it plainly does very much derogate from the power and authority, or the goodness and mercy of God*.' The tragical death of the virtuous Servetus; the persecution of those who denied this doctrine in almost every protestant country; the late infamous riots at Birmingham; the cruel treatment of Dr. Priestley, a man who was an honour to religion and human nature; the envenomed shafts of calumny, and the bitter reproaches, levelled against all those who have courage to oppose the popular notion of atonement; are circumstances which, when duly considered, will enable us to account for multitudes being deterred, all along from the time of the reformation, from looking closely into the subject. None but persons of strong minds, or who are strongly influenced by the love of truth, will dare to attend to the reasoning of men whose touch (to speak figuratively) is supposed to be mortal, who are represented as enemies of Christ, and agents of the devil to corrupt the christian world, and that too by men who are regarded as a kind of oracles, by

* Dr. Toulmin's Life of Socinus, p. 186.

their party, and their opinions made the standard of orthodoxy.

6. Many persons not only refuse to attend themselves to what is advanced against the popular doctrine of atonement, but they do all they can to deter others ; by representing it as a doctrine essential to salvation, that to reject it exposes to damnation, and that those who oppose it ought to be regarded as dangerous characters, as enemies to Christ and redemption through his blood. Such a mode of proceeding is unjust and unchristian ; but it has its effect with many : they suffer themselves to be frightened, and dare not examine what is said in opposition to what they are told is so sacred. Thus what is thought a main pillar of orthodoxy is propped for a season, and the erroneous notions of darker times are perpetuated in the present more enlightened age.

7. To the present day there has not been that freedom of enquiry, among christians in general, which ought ever to exist. Prejudice, bigotry, party spirit, and illiberality have much prevented the detection of error, and the discovery of truth. I hope it will not be thought uncandid if I say that the notion of satisfaction for sin owes its continuance, at least, in some instances, to these things ; especially when it is remembered that some men, who have at other times appeared candid and liberal, have lost their temper and liberality when they have had to do with those *they* call Socinians.

On the whole I would observe, that neither the prevalence of a doctrine, nor its long continuance, ought to be regarded as any proof of its truth. The worship of the Virgin Mary was once as prevalent in the christian world as the worship of her son. The doctrine of transubstantiation was as universally believed as the doctrine of satisfaction ever has been: the former, like the latter, was built upon a literal construction of figurative expressions in scripture, and the former has obtained credit much longer among the catholics than the latter has among the protestants. If a doctrine be true, it must be proved so by scripture and reason; there is no other just method of deciding.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

The Salvation of Sinners by the free grace of God.

AS the doctrine I am attempting to refute is regarded by many as the only foundation of hope to sinners, it may be demanded what I would substitute in its place? I answer briefly, the salvation of sinners by the free grace of God. If this be well understood, it will be perceived that nothing is lost by giving up the doctrine of satisfaction. But it seems necessary to enquire,

1. What is meant by the phrase *free grace*? Grace, in the sacred writings, generally means favour: the grace of God, means the favour of God: free grace, means free favour: what is of grace, is properly a gift; of free grace, a free gift: consequently what is of the free grace of God must be a free gift flowing from his pure benevolence. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, frequently means the favour of God revealed to us by Jesus Christ in the gospel; as the law which God gave to Israel is called the law of Moses because given by Moses: nor did Jesus manifest any grace to men but by the appointment and command of his Father. Every idea of a contract, stipulation, or bargain between the Father and Christ, of the latter purchasing the blessings of salvation of the former, excludes the idea of the free-grace of God; for what is bought and paid for cannot be a free gift: favour procured by an equivalent given to him from whom it is obtained cannot be *free* favour. If the notion of satisfaction admit an idea of the favour of Christ being free, the idea of the free favour of God it destroys.

2. What is meant by *salvation in Christ*, or by his *name*?

The salvation of sinners does not mean their being rescued from the hand of God which was stretched forth to destroy them, or their being sheltered from the sword of his revenging justice, or his being induced to lay aside his wrath and vengeance against them; but their being actually

delivered from their former state of ignorance, sin, and the painful circumstances in which sin involved them, and their final deliverance from death. Salvation is not an ideal thing, a persuasion of mind, respecting certain transactions which passed between God and Christ, on our behalf, or respecting a certain work which Christ performed personally, on the ground of which it is imagined that our final salvation is fully secured, especially if we do but believe that he performed the work *for us* ; but it is an internal and external deliverance, a freedom to the mind from the slavery of ignorance and vice, a purification of the heart and conscience from sin and condemnation, terminating in newness of life. No man can, with truth, be said to be saved any further than he is actually delivered from sin in his heart and life ; from the love, the practice, and the contamination of it. Hence it follows, from the very nature of salvation, that Jesus saves us, individually, only so far as we are delivered, by the light and influence of his gospel, from ignorance, vice, and misery, and as he makes us wise, virtuous, and happy. Under another view, he saved the nations, who live under his dispensation, by delivering them, through the preaching of the gospel among them, from their former state of pagan superstition and idolatry ; but this is not the view of salvation most necessary to be dwelt on in this place.

In Christ, frequently means, in his gospel, or in that dispensation which was introduced by him,

and at the head of which he is placed. So the name Moses is several times used when not his person, but his law is intended. *There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust;* (John v. 45.) but the Jews did not trust in the person of Moses, nor did he appear personally to condemn them in the days of Christ; it was in the law they trusted, and it was the law that condemned them. *Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him;* but it was not the person of Moses they preached, but his law. Moses was said to be read in the synagogues; (Acts xv. 31.) but it could only mean that his law was read there. In like manner, the preaching of the gospel, which came by Christ, and was confirmed by his death, is called the preaching of Christ and him crucified. From all the accounts we have of apostolic preaching in the book of Acts, it is clear that what they published to men was what God had revealed by his Son; yet it is all called preaching Christ: it evidently must mean what Christ had made known by the gospel. So we read of believers being in Christ; but it can only mean in the faith, under the influence, and in the obedience of the gospel: and the gentiles who were far off, during the continuance of the dispensation of the law, are said to be made nigh in Christ Jesus; it must mean under the dispensation of Christ, the gospel, which includes them as well as the Jews, and is intended to bring the whole world nigh to God. Hence it follows, that when sinners are said to have salvation in

Christ, the plain meaning is, that salvation is made known, and all the means of enjoying it afforded, in the gospel.

The word *name* frequently means *authority*. Christ said he did not come in his own name, meaning that he did not come without proper authority: that he came in his Father's name, meaning that he had authority from God for what he said and did: that if another came in his own name, meaning without divine authority, him they would receive. Christ said and did every thing in his Father's name, that is, by the power and authority he had received from God. The apostles preached and wrought miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, by the power and authority they had derived from him. Hence Christ said, *he who receiveth you receiveth me, and he who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me*: he could not mean he who received him, or his apostles, personally, for then no man could receive either him or them in the present day, but that the person who receiveth the doctrine of the apostles, receiveth his doctrine, and that he who receiveth his doctrine, receiveth the doctrine of God. It follows that, when it is said *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, but the name of Jesus, the meaning is, that God hath set forth no other person, as invested with power and authority, to reveal and dispense his salvation to men, but Jesus Christ: hence it is concluded that to be saved by his name means to be saved by the gospel, which

we receive on his authority, as evidenced by his miracles and resurrection.

3. What is meant by sinners being *redeemed by the blood* of Christ?

Redemption, throughout the sacred writings, means, when applied to persons, actual deliverance from some danger, evil, or bondage. The penmen of the New Testament never represent that we are redeemed, merely, by Christ's having died for us : they include his death among other things which operate our deliverance : but they never speak of the mere act of his dying as exonerating us from the consequences of sin ; on the contrary, repentance, faith, and obedience, are insisted on as essential to our final salvation. Had Christ merely died, without rising again and sending his gospel to mankind, his death would not have redeemed the world. He is never said to have redeemed us *from* God, or from the hand of divine justice ; but he is said to have redeemed us *to* God, Rev. v. 9. to have given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity : Tit. ii. 14. The redemption which we have in Christ Jesus is not described as a legal transaction between him and the Father, a settling of our accounts with divine justice by the payment of our debts, or as consisting in his removing by his death the incumbrances which stopped the course of divine mercy, and so rendering God propitious to sinners ; but as consisting in our actual deliverance from ignorance, condemnation of conscience, moral pollution, and death.

It is by the gospel we are actually redeemed. By its light we are delivered back from a state of ignorance and blindness of mind. By its teaching and influence we are freed from inward condemnation, from the love, power, and practice of sin, and, by what it reveals respecting a state of immortality, we are animated with the prospect of redemption from death and the grave.

Christ is said to redeem us to God by his blood, because it cost him his life to bring the the gospel, with all its light and blessings, to the world ; because he patiently submitted to all his sufferings in pursuance of the great object he had before him, the salvation of men ; because his death was the confirmation of his testimony, and he sealed the truth and grace of God with his blood ; and because in consequence of his obedience, even to death, he is rewarded with the dignity and power to which he is exalted, as a prince and a saviour, in the exercise of which he dispenses redemption by the gospel. No rational idea can be formed of the way in which we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, otherwise than as his death stands connected with the gospel, and his ministration at the head of the present dispensation. Thus it appears that we have redemption in Christ Jesus as we have it in his gospel : he came and revealed it, he lost his life in making it known, he is appointed by the Father to dispense it, and we enjoy it so far as we conform to his teaching and example.

4. What is meant by the *justification* of a sinner ?

In brief, the making him a righteous person ; this is said to be by faith, because it is effected by the teaching and influence of the gospel, by the belief of and obedience to it. It may be divided into two branches. First, the deliverance of the sinner from condemnation of mind and slavish fear, by the knowledge he derives, from the gospel, of the pardoning mercy and forgiving love of God. The gospel calls to repentance, and exhibits the free forgiveness of sins, and all who repent and believe are said to receive the remission of sins. Secondly, the production of a truly righteous character, by inspiring principles of virtue and goodness, and leading to right actions. Under this view the gospel justifies, or makes righteous, the ungodly ; as the belief of it becomes a practical credence, and produceth holiness of heart and life. God will not justify the ungodly in their sins ; that would be contrary to the holiness of his nature, the uniform rectitude of his ways, a violation of the law he gave to Israel, and highly injurious to the moral system ; but he will freely pardon the penitent sinner, and, if he believe and obey his gospel, make him truly righteous, and save him from future condemnation. It is conceived that it is thus God justifieth the ungodly.

5. What do Paul and James mean by *imputed righteousness* ?

The apostles never spoke of the righteousness of Christ being transferrable, or of his personal

righteousness, whether it consisted in doing or suffering, being imputed to sinners ; the righteousness which they described as being by faith of Jesus Christ, intends not his personal obedience, but the righteousness to which the sinner attains by believing, meaning by *believing* a practical credence. Imputed righteousness, as stated by Paul, Rom. iv. 7, 8. evidently intends the non-imputation of sin, in other words, the free forgiveness of sins. But when, in the same chapter, he mentions Abraham's faith being imputed to him for righteousness, he seems to mean that his believing the declarations of God was reckoned to him as a righteous act, and that his believing the divine promises influenced him to obedience. James has clearly this idea, for he says, Jam. ii. 21, 22, 23. that Abraham's faith being made perfect by works, and his being justified by works, was an accomplishment of the scripture saying, that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness. Strictly speaking, there can be no righteousness but what consists in acting right ; and, though God freely pardons penitent sinners, it is impossible he should impute right actions to those who have only performed wrong ones ; because it would be an imputation contrary to truth. He furnishes all the motives and means necessary to enable the sinner to attain to righteousness ; but he will reckon none righteous but those who do that which is lawful and right. One thing Paul seems to have had much in view, i. e. that sinful gentiles might become righteous persons,

without the works of the Jewish law ; that if they repented and believed the gospel, God would forgive their sins ; and that by obeying the influence and directions of the gospel they might become such characters as he would account righteous.

AFTER the preceding remarks, it may be proper to take a more particular view of divine grace, or favour.

1. It originates in the nature, character, perfections, and immutable designs of God ; not in any thing out of him, which induces or excites him to be favourable to his offending creatures.

GOD IS LOVE. That infinite, eternal, unchangeable being, whom heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain, is declared to be love. A boundless ocean of benevolence is found in the Deity. He is not a God of wrath, vindictiveness, and revenge ; but always loving, infinitely loving to his creatures. No malevolence exists in his infinite mind, he bears not the least ill will to the most vile, insignificant, or worthless of his creatures ; but the greatest kindness and good will to them all. He proclaimed his name to Moses, ‘ The Lord God, merciful, and gracious.’ He delighteth in mercy. In all his works and ways he shows himself good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Can such a being as this behold misery, from whatever source it may spring, or in whatever corner of the universe it

may be found, without being mercifully disposed to remove it? Can infinite love see wants any where, and not have a disposition to relieve them? Can any creature need a blessing from him which he is not disposed freely to bestow? Surely the infinite benevolence of the Almighty is a sufficient reason why sinners should expect salvation from him on the ground of his free favour, which spontaneously flows from his grand characteristic, LOVE.

The goodness of God endureth continually. In whatever light we contemplate that infinite excellence which is essential to the Most High, by whatever names of perfection we distinguish the different displays of it, goodness is still paramount. God hath never existed for a moment, through immeasurable duration, without being infinitely good. All his works exhibit legible marks of his goodness, nor hath it ever ceased to operate in any part of his creation. A being of such unbounded and immutable goodness, who is full of mercy, cannot fail to be ever ready to forgive, always willing to show favour, to save sinners, to bless his creatures, to communicate to them all the happiness they are capable of receiving. The infinite goodness and mercy of God are a solid foundation of hope for sinners, and afford every encouragement for them, by penitence and submission, to seek salvation in a way of free favour.

Have we not all one Father? Christ hath revealed God to us in the character of a loving and merciful Father; not of an austere, relentless,

vengeful judge. He hath taught that, if evil men know how to give good gifts to their children, much more will our heavenly Father give good things to them who ask him. He hath directed us to seek all blessings from the free bounty of the Almighty, even as children seek all they want from the bounty and kindness of their parents. As God hath condescended to assume the paternal character, we may be sure he will sustain it in the highest perfection : whatever of kindness and affection can be illustrated by the love, the softest emotions, the bowels of compassion, the sympathy and tenderness, of the most affectionate parent, we may be confident, dwells, in infinite perfection, in him. How can it be conceived that any thing should exist in such a character to prevent his offending offspring from approaching him ? or to render it necessary for some one to interpose to excite his pity and render him favourable to them ? or to prevent their confidently expecting his favour, when they seek it with a penitent heart ?

The designs of God towards his creatures have ever been benevolent ; this appears from his character, perfections, and the relation he is pleased to sustain as their loving and merciful Father : and his designs, arising from his infinite wisdom and pure goodness, are immutable. What favour may not creatures expect from a being whose nature is love ? whose goodness and mercy are infinite, who condescends to reveal himself as their Father, and whose design is to do them the

greatest good? With what safety may every penitent soul rely on his favour for salvation!

Thus it appears that the favour of God to creatures is not founded upon an equivalent which he hath received for it; but that it hath its foundation in the infinite excellency of the divine nature, in his essential perfections, his adorable character, and immutable designs; and that the foundation of a sinner's hope remains unmoved, though the notion of satisfaction be taken away; for it is the eternal rock, God himself.

2. The favour of God to men is manifested by the gift of Christ, and by all that Christ taught, did, and suffered.

All that Christ is, both as a teacher and a saviour, he is by the gift and appointment of the Father. Whatever grace came by him, whatever blessings are derived from him, whatever deliverance he works for us, must be ascribed to the love of God as its primary source. The whole work of Christ may be summarily comprehended in this short proposition, i. e. to make God known and carry his good pleasure into effect. He did nothing to make the Father love us, to dispose him to be gracious and merciful to us; but every thing to show us how loving, gracious, and merciful God is, in and of himself. The consideration of this should lead the sinner to terminate his hope and gratitude in God, to whose love he owes every thing, not in Christ, by whom the Father's love and grace are manifested, and his blessings communicated.

Christ is not the cause, but the effect, of the love and favour of God to men. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son* : John iii. 16. God's love existed in full perfection prior to the gift of his Son : consequently the Son cannot be the cause, but, being a gift arising from his love, is evidently the effect of it. A gift bestowed of mere free favour, to be a universal blessing to mankind, cannot be the price of that favour, or the procuring cause of the blessings comprehended in it ; but such a gift is Christ. It is clear that he is not the procuring cause of our salvation, or of the favour of God to us ; because all the blessings of grace and salvation are comprehended in him, as the gift of God to the world. It follows that our hope of salvation should not be built upon any thing done by Christ to procure it, but upon the free favour of God manifested in giving him.

God's having raised up his Son Jesus, and given him to be a light to the gentiles, and his salvation to the ends of the earth, is such a proof of the greatness of his love, and such an earnest of the riches of his favour to a sinful world, as ought to remove every idea of his being wrathful and vindictive, and fully satisfy all men of the freeness of his mercy, of his readiness to forgive, and that he never needed any inducement to render him favourable. Having bestowed this precious gift, his beloved Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? It would be monstrous to suppose more favour in the gift than in the

giver, or to think that what Christ hath done may be more safely relied on for salvation than the free favour of God who raised him up to be a saviour. This would be to magnify the stream above the fountain from which it flows, to exalt the medium in which blessings are revealed above the original and eternal source of all blessings, and to suppose a derived fulness to be more abundant than the underived fulness from which it came; for all the fulness of grace found in Christ he received from the Father. What we discover in the stream should lead us to conceive of the nature of the fountain from which it flows; what we discover of mercy and grace in Christ should lead us to conceive of God as merciful and gracious, and establish our faith and hope in, and fill us with gratitude to him, as the underived source of all good.

The teaching of Jesus made known the grace of God to men. He said nothing of his being sent to appease an angry God, to atone his wrath, and satisfy his justice, that it might become fit for him to show mercy; but in the most plain and direct terms he revealed the love, mercy, and grace of God to the world. He declared that it was in love the Father had given him; that he sent him, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He preached repentance and forgiveness of sins. He published glad tidings, concerning the good will of God to men, his readiness to pardon penitent sinners freely, and to bestow his favour upon all who

would seek it. What he taught concerning the character of his Father, and his abounding mercy and grace to his creatures, has a direct tendency to lead sinners to look to the Almighty as a just God and Saviour, and to trust in him for their whole salvation.

The spirit and conduct of Jesus illustrated his doctrine, and exhibited a fine imitation of the God of grace and mercy. His life was one continued scene of virtue and benevolence. He went about doing good. Misery, wherever he saw it, excited his compassion. He did not think the most abandoned characters beneath his notice ; he attended to their case, and sought their reformation. His temper was most merciful and forgiving. He had enemies ; they rendered him evil for good, and hatred for his love : but did he, in return, discover any thing vindictive, wrathful, or revengeful ? No, he did not render evil for evil, nor railing for railing. View him in his approach to Jerusalem a short time before his cruel death. He knew that in Jerusalem dwelt his most malignant and inveterate enemies : he was not a stranger to the cruel treatment he should shortly experience at their hands : he also understood the dreadful calamities which would befall them. When he beheld the city, he felt the strongest emotions ; but they were not emotions of anger and resentment : feelings of sympathy and compassion, while contemplating the impending destruction of his enemies, seemed to suspend in him, for the time, the consideration of their base and cruel treatment

of him, and the shameful and excruciating death they would shortly inflict upon him ; his whole soul seemed wrapt in sorrow on their account ; his flowing tears, and pathetic lamentation, bespoke the commiseration he felt, and his tender mercy towards the vilest of men, even when those men were his most implacable enemies. Again, view him when suspended on the cross, in all the agonies of a most cruel death, surrounded by the taunts and reproaches of his brutal murderers. Did he in that distressing moment breathe any resentment, or utter any imprecations ? Nothing of the kind ; but he prayed for his crucifiers with his dying breath. When raised from the dead, he ordered a message of forgiveness to be published among the people who had so lately imbrued their hands in his guiltless blood. And is this the man who is placed before us as the image of the invisible God, whom men have so often described as wrathful, vindictive, and incapable of forgiving, unless he first receives satisfaction ? If God be the infinite reality of what the merciful Jesus, in his teaching, spirit, and conduct, is the image, his grace must be amply sufficient for our salvation, without our associating it with the popular notion of atonement. To transfer our dependence from the Father to Christ, instead of being led by him to the Father, would imply that we thought more dependence could be placed on the image than on the reality which it is designed to make known.

It has been often said, that the death of Christ was necessary to show the malignity of sin, and God's wrath and displeasure against it; but no such thing was ever intimated by Jesus and his apostles; on the contrary, his death is several times spoken of as manifesting the love of God: and it is hard to conceive how the same circumstance can manifest both wrath and love. As the death of Jesus confirmed his testimony of the truth and grace, love and mercy of God, it may properly be said to manifest his love in establishing the ground of our hope. The manner in which Christ suffered exhibited the victory and triumph of love over all the ignorance, folly, malice, rage, and wickedness of men; for all these operating against him, and venting their utmost fury upon him, in the treatment he received, could not excite a single emotion in him contrary to love, nor provoke him to the least unkindness, nor prevent his continuing to manifest love, even to his murderers. What could enable him thus patiently to suffer but the knowledge he had of his Father's love, and its influence upon his righteous soul? In this scene he appeared the Son of the Father in love, the imitator, and so the image, of his love. Viewed in this light, by his death he gave the strongest confirmation of the love of God which he came to reveal. Hence it appears, that his death, so far from being set forth, in itself merely, as the only ground of hope to sinners, is a ground of hope to them only as it confirms the

truth and grace, and displays the love of God, for their salvation.

3. The gospel reveals the free favour of God to men, and on that ground exhibits salvation and everlasting life.

The gospel proceeds entirely on the foundation of God's love to the world. It exhibits grace and mercy, salvation and everlasting life, as proceeding from his love. It represents Christ as the messenger of God, sent to reveal his truth and grace, to dispense salvation, and to conduct men to everlasting life. It contains every blessing, of a spiritual kind, that any of the children of men can need. Are they ignorant? it is sent to enlighten them. Are they wandering from God, in the crooked paths of iniquity? it invites them back to him, and assures them of his mercy on their return. Are they guilty? it teaches them that God forgives sins freely. Have they formed vicious habits, and lived in abominable practices? it presents every motive and influence, to the person who will seriously attend to it, that is calculated to destroy the power of sin, to produce new dispositions, and lead to new habits and practices. Are they ignorant of the will of God? it makes known his will in the most clear and perfect manner. Do they pant for more substantial enjoyment than this world can afford? it reveals to them all the riches of divine grace, all spiritual blessings. Are they affected with a sense of their mortality, with the gloomy prospect of lying down

in the grave? it brings life and immortality to light; it points to the morn of the resurrection, and promises an endless state of blessedness and glory. In fact, it is a system beginning with the infinite love of God, and terminating with the universal and permanent purity and happiness of the creation. In such a system, what need or room can there be for the gloomy and ungracious doctrine of satisfaction? The revelation of a God, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things*, precludes the idea.

In the gospel every thing is free gift. Christ is the gift of God: the gospel itself a favour bestowed by him: forgiveness a blessing freely given: salvation is by grace, or through free favour: by a glorious display of divine favour sinners are accepted, and blessed with the adoption of sons: and eternal life is the gift of God. Where every thing comes in the way of free gift, and is bestowed as a favour, there can be no need, nor any room, to enquire who hath purchased this or that blessing for us? no price was demanded, no equivalent asked, no satisfaction required; the God of infinite love hath exhibited every thing we need as a free gift, by his son, in the gospel. Thus the doctrine of satisfaction is superseded, by a system of free grace; sinners have no need of it, the grace of God is sufficient for them.

4. Christ and his apostles represented the salvation of sinners as effected by the grace of God.

This is strikingly illustrated by one of our Lord's parables, (Luke xv. 11—32,) that of the

prodigal son. Like the prodigal, when men seek to be independent of God, and, following the impulses of appetite and passion, depart from him, however they may imagine that, by casting off the restraint of his paternal authority, and gratifying every sensual propensity, they shall gain their fill of pleasure, they soon find themselves plunged in guilt, shame, and misery. What is the unhappy creature to do when, like the prodigal, he comes to himself, when the moment of calm and serious reflection returns, and his eyes are opened to the wretchedness of the situation to which his vicious courses have reduced him? If he think of God as a wrathful, vindictive being, whose justice is too severe and unbending to accept of any thing short of perfect, sinless obedience, he will be driven to the border, if not hurried into the gulf of despair: if an act of suicide, or a state of distraction, do not terminate a career of vice, such gloomy thoughts of the Almighty will be likely to im-bitter all his days: unless he should happen to be persuaded of the truth of the notion of Christ's having made satisfaction for all his sins, and wrought out a perfect righteousness for him, in which case the anguish of his mind may be relieved; but the completion and permanency of his conversion from vice to strict virtue will be endangered. Nothing can afford him relief, or inspire him with hope, in a rational and consistent way, but the remembrance of his heavenly Father, with some just views of his true character, against whom he hath sinned.

Jesus does not represent the prodigal, when he came to himself, as thinking of his father as an angry, vindictive person, as unbending in his resentment, and not capable of showing compassion to his offending child, as standing upon his honour so far as to refuse forgiveness to his disobedient son till some one had made satisfaction for his crimes ; though these are the ideas too often suggested to offending creatures when they begin to think seriously of God. But he represents the prodigal as still conceiving his father to be kind and liberal : this inspires him with hope and resolution to return. So when a sinner comes to serious reflection, and is sorry for his sins, it is the knowledge that God is still his Father, still kind and compassionate, that inspires him with the hope of forgiveness, and encourages him to cast himself upon his mercy. Jesus does not describe the wretched young man as entertaining a better opinion of his brother than of his father, and as thinking it necessary that he should go to the father on his behalf, to pacify his anger, and procure forgiveness for him ; no more need the penitent suppose that is necessary for some one to go to God on his behalf, to pacify his anger and procure forgiveness for him : he can seek to no being more merciful, more ready to forgive, and show him all possible favour, than God.

When the prodigal is returning, Christ does not represent the father, as remaining unmoved, refusing to exercise any compassion, or paternal tenderness, towards his unhappy child, until some

one had interposed and offered an atonement for his follies : he brings in no third person, with an equivalent, or consideration, to move the father to be favourable to the young man, and procure his forgiveness ; but describes the father as acting purely from the impulse of his own love and mercy, as running to meet the son while yet a great way off, and embracing and welcoming him home. He is described as forgiving his rebellious child freely, receiving him to his favour freely, and bestowing every blessing upon him freely. No consideration is implied, in the whole account, but the love of the father and the repentance of the offending son.

If this parable be illustrative of the way in which God saves sinners, it certainly teaches that they are saved by the divine free favour, without any other consideration but the repentance of the offender, it follows that a satisfaction to divine justice, or any equivalent given to God for their pardon, is totally out of the question.

In this manner did Jesus teach sinners the way of salvation. He called them to repentance, he encouraged them to believe the declarations of divine mercy, he taught them to view God as a Father ever compassionate and forgiving, that he would freely forgive all who asked forgiveness of him in a right disposition, and save all who sought for his salvation. *Ask, saith he, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*

The apostle Paul taught that it is the grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men : and that those who enjoyed salvation were saved by his grace. He said nothing of salvation being procured by a satisfaction being made to justice, or that it was brought to men by a vicarious sacrifice : he ascribed it entirely to the free favour of God.

On the whole then it appears, that the scripture doctrine is salvation by grace, not by contract, bargain, or a righteous person dying in the place and stead of the guilty ; and that a vicarious sacrifice, or satisfaction for sins, never was either necessary, or admissible, in order to our being saved ; seeing the free favour of God does every thing, from first to last, in the business. All that is necessary in order to sinners being saved is, for them to repent, turn from sin to God, cast themselves upon his free mercy, believe the declarations of the gospel, become obedient to the truth, and live in the daily imitation of Jesus Christ. Those who do these things need entertain no fears of their present and everlasting safety ; for Christ will, as the dispenser of the divine favour to men, be found the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him : such may wait with confidence for the hope of immortality.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

An enquiry concerning the doctrine of Atonement.

THE word atonement is capable of being understood in a sense very different to that in which it is now commonly taken. It seems to be purely of English origin: compounded of the words *at* and *one* with the termination *ment*. Its true ideal meaning seems to be the setting at one, or effecting a reunion, where any variance or distance has subsisted. It appears to be constructed the same, and to convey the same idea, as the word *reconcilement*, used by some of our old writers. Were the writers on atonement to retain the true ideal meaning of the word, and apply it to the reconciling of the world, or the bringing of the gentiles nigh to God under the dispensation of the gospel, or the setting of sinners at one with God through the mediation of Christ; not the reconciling of God to the world, the appeasing of his wrath, and making satisfaction to his justice for the sins of men, we should not oppose their statement. But as words pass from one generation to another, they sometimes acquire an arbitrary meaning, and at length convey ideas foreign to their true ideal sense: this seems to have been the case with the word atonement. It is now generally used to express a doctrine very opposite to every thing taught by Christ and his apostles:

hence, to avoid disputing about words, it seems necessary to refute error under the name which its advocates have applied to it.

It may be proper to enquire in what sense the word *atonement* is used in the Old Testament; especially as our opponents lay so much stress on the supposed vicarious nature of the Jewish sacrifices.

The Hebrew word, *copher*, translated atonement, includes the idea of covering*. So far as it had to do with things of a moral nature, it seems to mean the covering of sin, by an act of pardon†, and a legal purification from it: or the

* See PARKHURST's Hebrew and English Lexicon, and BATE's Critica Hebræa. It is applied to the substance with which Noah's ark was covered, also to the act of covering it. Gen. vi. 14. It is rendered, *hoar frost*, Exod. xvi. 14. Job xxxviii. 29. Psa. cxlvii. 16. It is probable *hoar frost* might be called *copher* from its being observed to lie on the ground like a covering. When *copher* is translated *village*, as 1 Sam. vi. 18. Neh. vi. 2. the idea of a covering suggests itself, a *village* being a retired, sheltered place. When it is rendered *bribe*, as 1 Sam. xii. 3. Amos v. 12. the same idea is retained, a *bribe* being a covering, intended to blind the eyes. As a noun it is the Hebrew name of the mercy-seat, which was the lid or covering of the ark of the covenant. The idea of covering, in a figurative sense, may be attached to *copher* when translated *atonement*, as what is forgiven is figuratively covered, and when sinners are cleansed from sin, God will remember their iniquities no more against them, their sin is like a thing entirely covered, so as no more to appear. See Isa. i. 16, 17, 18. Ezek. 18 chap.

† Psa. xxxii. 1. and Rom. iv. 7. The forgiving of sin is called covering it.

bringing of the people nigh to take refuge in the divine mercy*. That the word could not be used, in the Jewish law, to express a satisfaction made for sins, or something by which the Deity was placated, is evident from this circumstance : atonement was appointed to be made in cases of natural infirmity, or ceremonial uncleanness, which certainly did not involve the idea of moral defilement. After child-birth the female was kept distant from the sanctuary, for a limited time, after which *atonement* was made for her ; it cannot mean that she had incurred the displeasure of God by obeying his command, ‘ be fruitful and multiply,’ and that a sacrifice was necessary to avert that displeasure, but an offering was presented as the mean of bringing her nigh and reuniting her to the congregation of the LORD after her separation. (Lev.

* That the Hebrew word *copher* does not necessarily mean a price paid to justice, to exonerate the sinner from punishment, but that it relates rather to the exercise of divine mercy, appears from its being, as a noun, the name of the covering of the ark of the covenant, which our translators have, I believe, uniformly rendered *mercy-seat* : and it can hardly be supposed that it should have a clear different meaning when applied to the covering of the ark from what it has when applied to the Jewish sacrifices, and to what the Jewish priests did for the people, seeing these things were all closely connected, as parts of the same system of religion. That the translators understood *copher* sometimes to mean mercy and forgiveness, appears from the manner in which they rendered it in the following passages, Deut. xxi. 18. Chap. 32. 43. Jer. xviii. 23. Psa. lxxviii. 38. where we meet with the words, merciful, forgiven, forgave.

12 chap.) It was a mode of legal cleansing merely; for no moral pollution could be incurred by her separation. *Atonement* was also made for inanimate things; but these were incapable of moral defilement. An infected house was to be cleansed by *atonement* being made for it. (Lev. xiv. 53.) This ceremonial seems to have been intended to prevent the spread of contagion, and to show when the house needed no longer to be avoided; figuratively, to set it at one with the neighbourhood. Aaron was commanded to make an *atonement* for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle, and for the altar (Lev. xvi. 33.); not that God was angry with these things, and a bleeding victim became necessary to appease his anger; but to denote that the sanctuary, tabernacle, and altar were consecrated to God, that the people might regard them with one general feeling of piety. On the great day of *atonement*, under the law, the people of Israel were brought nigh before JEHOVAH, to express their penitence for sin, to take refuge in the divine mercy, and to renew the expression of their obedience. (Lev. 16 chap.) Without real penitence, confidence in the mercy of God, and obedience to his commands, all their sacrifices, and all that the priest could do for them, would have been useless.

One thing is very observable in the whole of what we read concerning *atonement* in the Old Testament: it is, that every part of the ceremonial was intended to fill the people with sentiments

of piety and virtue, to stimulate them to devote themselves to God as a holy people ; in other words, to bring them nigh to him as his worshippers with a pious regard to his character and will. Indeed the true sense of making atonement for any person or thing, in the Old Testament, seems to be the making it, or him, *clean*, or *proper for the divine service**. But this is very different from the notion of satisfaction for sins.

It is contended by our opponents that, because, under the law, the forgiveness of sins was received by the offender, through the medium of a sacrifice, therefore the sacrifice was a satisfaction for the offence ; but this is a false conclusion. The forgiveness of sins is now received through the medium of the gospel, which is called the word of reconciliation, because it reconciles, or brings the world nigh to God ; but will any man say the gospel is a satisfaction for sins ? Under the law the mercy of God was revealed through the medium of sacrifices ; when the priest presented the offering of the penitent offender, and God accepted it, atonement was said to be made, and sin to be forgiven ; because in this way the offender was restored to the privileges of Jewish worship, and

* The Hebrew word, *cofher*, translated atonement, frequently means either moral or ceremonial cleansing ; and, in this sense, our translators have taken it in the following passages. 1 Sam. iii. 14. Isa. vi. 7. & xxii. 14. & xxvii. 9. Ezek. xliii. 20, 26. Psa. lxxv. 3. & lxxix. 9. In these passages they have rendered it by the words *purge*, and *purged*.

assured of the pardoning mercy of God. So now the mercy of God is revealed to us, by Christ in the gospel, and confirmed to us by his death.

The English word atonement occurs but once in the New Testament, Rom. v. 11. *We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* I repeat that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word *atonement* can be found: and in this place it is not God, but man, who is said to receive it. If men still contend for what the apostle speaks of, under the name of atonement, they should remember that it was not God, but man, that received atonement by Christ: consequently the manner in which he speaks of the subject, so far from giving the least countenance to their notion of atonement, destroys it. The only passage, in the apostolic writings, in which the word is found, is against our opponents, as they suppose the *atonement* to be received by God, but that passage expressly mentions that it is received by the creature.

The Greek word *καταλλαγή*, rendered atonement in the above passage, is never used by the LXX. in any passage relating to legal atonements: it is rendered reconciliation in several other places in the New Testament: (see Rom. v. 10. and xi. 15.—1 Cor. vii. 11. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20.) In the only passage in which it is rendered atonement, Rom. v. 11, the margin reads *reconciliation*. Several learned translators and expositors instead

of *atonement* read *reconciliation**. The Latin versions read *reconciliationem*†, a term of the same meaning with our word reconciliation. Thus we have the testimony of a number of learned and pious men, of different parties among christians, that what is called *atonement* ought to be called reconciliation. It follows that the true christian doctrine is not that of *atonement*, as the word is commonly understood, but the doctrine of *reconciliation*‡. It remains for us to examine this latter doctrine.

Good men have said much about Christ's having reconciled God to sinners; but it is in the nature of things impossible he should have done this, nor is the least hint of any thing of the kind to be found in the scriptures.

On the face of the subject it appears manifestly absurd to suppose God could need reconciling to his creatures. Shall we say that the sins of men

* See HAMMOND, WHITBY, DODDRIDGE, WAKEFIELD, and SCARLET, on the place.

† See BEZA, MONTANUS, CASTALIO, and the VULGATE, in loc.

‡ The same may be said of the Jewish atonements. They were not intended to placate the Deity, or make him merciful and gracious; for he was so naturally in and of himself: he had proclaimed his name to Moses 'The LORD God, merciful and gracious, &c.;' but to reconcile, or bring the Jewish people near to God, to lead them to him, the fountain of mercy and pure goodness, for every blessing. The Hebrew word *copher* is rendered *reconcile* and *reconciliation*, in the following passages. Lev. vi. 30. & viii. 15. & xvi. 20. Ezek. xlv. 15, 17, 20. Dan. ix. 24.

kindled a fire of wrath in the bosom of the *God of love*, turned his infinite benevolence to wormwood and gall; and that it was necessary that Christ should experience all the fierceness of his wrath, that he should drink up the wormwood and gall, in order to our being spared? that the *Father of mercies* brandished his flaming sword, and that nothing but his plunging it in the heart of his well beloved Son could prevent the destruction of his sinful creatures? that such was the nature of divine justice, so infinitely remote was it from every thing of mercy, that nothing but the blood of the innocent could satisfy it, and render it a just thing for the absolute Sovereign of the universe to admit the penitent to favour? that the loving Parent of mankind was so estranged from his offspring, that nothing but the death of his Son, who always did those things which pleased him, could reconcile him to them; and that Christ by his death hath effected this reconciliation? Shall we say all this, and call it a scripture doctrine? No, nature shudders, and reason revolts, at such a representation, while the blessed gospel totally disavows it. As all the enmity and all the effects of sin are in and upon the creature, and extend not to God, it is reasonable to think all the reconciliation necessary is on the part of the creature.

Jehovah hath declared, 'fury is not in me.' There can be no wrath in God, for *he is love*: and there can be no wrath in love. If there be no wrath in God, there could be nothing in him

to appease ; for love could need no appeasing*. God never hated any thing but sin ; he never hated his creatures ; nor does he hate sin less now than he did before Christ died : it is still the object of his utter abhorrence, and he hath threatened it with severer punishment under the gospel than he did under the law.

Reconciliation implies a change in the person who is reconciled ; but God is an unchangeable being. Had he ever hated his creatures, he must have eternally hated them. Had enmity to any part of mankind once existed in his mind, there it must have always remained. Hence it cannot be true that Christ reconciled God to sinners ; because he could not reconcile him without, in some

*. ‘ It appears sufficiently clear, that God is *autoayatos*. good in himself, originally such. This is an attribute or property of God, uncaused, self-originated, always in him, the same yesterday, to day, and for evermore. And if God was pleased so to order things, that the Christ in the fulness of time should come into the world, and reconcile the world to God, and bring all such as accepted the conditions of faith and obedience to happiness.—This might be done, and in fact was done, without making any alteration in him : without *making* him to *be*, or to *show* himself *merciful* who was not in himself merciful before ; but by making man the proper object of mercy, or duly qualified to receive mercy. And if God thought it fit that this should be all accomplished by means of *death*, even *the death of the cross*, it is easy to see how we have *redemption through the blood of the cross*, without supposing that the death of our Saviour made any alteration in the supreme Governor of all.’

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sense, effecting a change in him, which is in the nature of things impossible.

If it can be ascertained that God once loved all his creatures, it will follow that he must have always loved them; because he is unchangeable. He certainly loved all mankind when he made them; for, as he never could derive any emolument from their existence, or injury or benefit from their conduct, nothing but pure benevolence could induce him to give them being, nothing else can induce him to preserve them. This fact, that God always loved mankind, and, being unchangeable, can never cease to love them, is a strong proof that nothing ever was necessary to be done to reconcile him to the world; for it would be manifestly absurd to talk of reconciling him to those towards whom he never felt the least enmity, but whom he always loved.

The doctrine of reconciliation is principally treated of in the writing of the apostle Paul; and it relates not to Christ's having reconciled God to the world, but the world to God, by bringing the gentiles under the dispensation of the gospel.

During the times of ignorance at which God winked, being without the divine oracles, not having the worship of the one living and true God established among them, but living in superstition and idolatry, the *gentiles* were considered as enemies. Not being included in the covenant made with the seed of Jacob, nor reckoned as the people of God under the former dispensation, but being strangers and foreigners, there existed a contrast

between them and the Jews ; they were in an opposite state to the church of God ; and their superstition placed them in the light of enemies to the law and worship of the true God. The death of Christ having confirmed a dispensation of divine grace which comprehends the whole world, the gentiles are said to be reconciled by his death : because no longer excluded from the privileges of God's people, being in this respect made fellow-heirs, and of the same body with the Jews. Christ having, under this view, put an end to the distinction between Jew and gentile, is said to have made both one, to have reconciled or included both in one body under the new dispensation. The Jews, by the peculiar dispensation they were under, were considered as in union with God, being his peculiar people, and a way of access to him was kept open to them by the institutions of the law ; the gentiles were shut out, no such way of access was open to them ; but now, under the dispensation introduced by Christ, the way is opened for both to have an access to the Father. Hence it is said that we gentiles have *now* received the reconciliation.

When the Jews put the word of God from them, the gospel dispensation, in the public ministration of it, was extended to the gentiles. Thus the casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the world. This reconciliation evidently relates to the gentiles being manifestly brought under the new dispensation when the Jews rejected it.

The former dispensation was limited to one nation ; it brought the Jews nigh to God in a peculiar relation, and in the enjoyment of peculiar privileges ; but the gospel knows no limitation, in it God extends his love, mercy, grace, and salvation to the whole world. Hence it is said, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*: bringing the world nigh to himself, by placing them under the dispensation of Christ, which, in its aspect and tendency, is equally favourable to all men.

Formerly the gentiles were far off in a sense in which the Jews were nigh: the former were *without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*: the latter had God's anointed prophets and priests among them, the promise of Christ given to them, the covenants of promise, a revealed ground of hope, and God in the manifestations of himself among them. But *now* in Christ Jesus, the gentiles, who were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ: i. e. in the dispensation which Christ sacrificed his life to introduce, and confirmed with his own blood. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, (that which made the distinction and placed Jew and gentile in opposition,) even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one*

body by the cross, having slain the enmity (abolished the Jewish ordinances) *thereby*. In these passages it is evident, that by reconciliation the apostle intended the gentiles being placed, in common with the Jews, under the dispensation of the gospel.

If, instead of first adopting a prevailing opinion, and then seeking to make the language of scripture bend to it, which has frequently been the case, we carefully observe the facts stated in the New Testament, and follow the reasoning of the apostles of Jesus, it will be ascertained that the reconciliation which Christ hath made, consists not in his having appeased the wrath of God, satisfied his justice, and changed its aspect towards sinners, nor in his having reconciled him to the world, but that it consists in his having *brought the gentiles nigh to God, by placing them under the dispensation of the gospel*. Consequently, the gentiles are no longer without Christ. *He* is sent to them, with all the truth and grace which came by him, in the gospel. They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-heirs of all the advantages of the gospel.

The apostles intreated sinners to be personally reconciled to God—to his character, the methods of his grace, to his authority, and all the dealings of his hand—to avail themselves of the gracious dispensation under which God had placed them, by embracing his gospel, receiving his favour, and becoming obedient to his Son—to lay aside their enmity and cease from rebellion, by repenting,

turning to God, and submitting themselves to his will. *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Such is the christian doctrine of reconciliation, which has been mistaken for the modern doctrine of atonement. The former displays the great love of God to sinners, stamps the greatest importance on the ministration of Christ, as calculated and designed to make the world pure and happy, and every way secures the good of the moral system. The latter is irreconcilable with the divine character, it gives the work of Christ an unimportant direction, by supposing it designed to effect some change in the aspect of divine justice, if not in God himself, where no change ever was either necessary or possible, and is inimical to the good of the moral system, as it substitutes an imaginary in the place of a real and personal righteousness.

CHAPTER SIXTH.

The Nature of the Death of Christ.

THE death of Christ is a fact too plainly stated in the New Testament for any serious christian to doubt its reality ; but upon two points relative to it the professors of the gospel are much divided, i. e. in their opinions of his person, and of what occasioned his death. These points we will examine.

One fact is certain, i. e. that whatever the person of Christ may be, his real and proper person died. It is not the death of a part of him, what was not essential to his existence, that the gospel declares, but the death of a whole Christ. He whom the Jews nailed to the cross was the very Christ. *Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* (Acts, ii. 36.) Such was the language of the apostles to the Jews. If a real and complete Christ did not die, a real and complete Christ could not rise; but that which was raised from the dead, be it whatever it might, was declared to be the son of God with power. Rom. i. 4. There is no Christ preached in the gospel but he who was crucified. He who was raised from the dead, consequently who actually died, is the appointed judge of quick and dead. Acts, xvii. 31. Hence it is clear, that Christ, in his proper person, could, and did, actually die.

Many of the advocates for the modern doctrine of atonement have contended that none but an infinite and eternal being could make satisfaction for sins; yet that the satisfaction was made by the death of the person who made it. The late *Mr. J.*

Irvey says, 'Had our Saviour's sufferings been the sufferings of a mere man, or of the most exalted angel, I acknowledge they could have borne no proportion to our demerit. It were impossible for a finite being to sustain the wrath or discharge the debt.—Was an infinite *Majesty* offended? an infinite *Mediator* atoned. Weigh the dignity, the

immense dignity of the *Redeemer's* person against the everlasting duration of our punishment, and it will not only *counter-balance* but *preponderate*. Finite creatures can never make an infinite satisfaction, no not through the most unlimited revolution of ages. Whereas when our *divine Lord* undertook the work, being truly and properly infinite, He finished it at once.' Thus, it seems the good man thought, that nothing but the death of a divine, infinite person, a person of immense dignity, could make satisfaction ; but the death of such a person is an impossibility ; consequently, on this ground, satisfaction for sins is an impossibility. Had Christ been such a person, he must have been immortal, incorruptible, impassible, his death would have been an absolute impossibility. There can be but one divine, infinite person, possessed of immense dignity, in the universe : even the self-existent God. To suppose him capable of dying, to talk of his being crucified and slain, of his enduring wrath, and punishment, would be in the highest degree absurd, not to say blasphemous. Yet if such absurdity be not true, the notion of satisfaction is a mere nullity, even according to the reasoning of many of its supporters. I am aware that others of them hold different language, and there is a manifest clashing among them. *Mr. Robinson*, of Leicester, in his scripture characters, says, ' In his humanity *alone* he was capable of obeying and suffering for us, in this alone he could sustain the character of a merciful and faithful high priest, and be touched with the feeling of our infir-

mities.' 'The *same nature* which sinned atoned for the transgression and repaired the breach.' According to this good man, the death of Christ was merely the death of a man, his sufferings human sufferings : but this involves an inference which would be fatal to other parts of his system ; i. e. that Christ was simply a man, anointed with the holy Spirit and with power ; for that which suffered and died was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That the death of Christ was strictly the death of a man, his apostles plainly testified ; *since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead* : 1 Cor. xv. 21. It is also plain from the relation given of his sufferings. He evidently felt as a man : was capable of being affected with shame and reproach, with scorn and reviling as we are : he was susceptible of corporeal pain, and anguish of mind, of all the emotions of human nature in a state of suffering. He bled, was exhausted with weariness and torture, yielded up his breath, was laid in the grave : every circumstance attendant on his death proves his proper humanity.

Though his death was properly that of a man, it was that of the most extraordinary man that ever lived. God anointed him with his Holy Spirit and with power, hence he is called *the Christ*. He had a divine mission superior to what had ever before been communicated. He possessed the most splendid miraculous powers. He was the most perfect image of God, in his teaching, spirit,

and conduct, of any person that ever appeared among men ; hence he is called the Son of God, his only-begotten, or best-beloved Son. He was destined to the highest dignity, honour, and glory, ever to be conferred on a human being. He came to reveal life, and life more abundantly to men ; hence he is called the Prince of life. He derived all his authority, his doctrine, and extraordinary powers from God, and came to begin a new creation, in a moral sense ; hence he is called the second man, the Lord from heaven. His conduct was most pure, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His life was a continued series of benevolent actions, he went about doing good. The sufferings of so distinguished a person, of such superior dignity of character, of such unequalled virtue and benevolence, must interest every virtuous and feeling mind, and be calculated to answer very important purposes. The sufferings of distinguished personages excite particular attention and respect ; but never have we heard of so distinguished a personage as Jesus of Nazareth : if they suffer wrongfully, and be treated with great cruelty, this increases the interest we feel in their sufferings ; but never were sufferings more entirely unprovoked, and unmerited than his : if they are persons eminently distinguished by superior virtue and usefulness, the feelings are raised to a high degree of veneration while we contemplate their sufferings ; but the virtue and usefulness of Christ have never been equalled. The manner in which he died too, his

calmness, patience, magnanimity, resignation to the will of God, and kindness to his murderers, all add interest to the scene. Thus it appears that the death of Christ is a subject of peculiar interest, and ought to excite much attention, and be examined with feelings of respect and admiration.

The Lord Jesus Christ died a violent death : he was cut off in the prime of life, in the flower of his days, not by any decay of nature, not by the operation of disease, not by any unforeseen incident, but by the wicked machinations of cruel men. What was done to him by men was sufficient to produce his death, without including any other circumstance. Their hurrying him from place to place, his loss of rest, his being buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and handled in the most rude and unfeeling manner, were circumstances calculated to exhaust nature, especially when added to his previous watching and mental conflict. This may account for his being so soon dead after he was crucified. His crucifixion must have terminated his life had they simply nailed him to the cross and left him there. And simply the wound which he received with a spear, which it seems pierced him to the heart, must have ended his life, had he not been already dead. It follows that we need seek for no other cause of his death but the cruel and murderous treatment he received at the hands of men.

When our Lord foretold his death, it was always as the effect of what would be done to him by sinners : that he must suffer many things of the

Jews, be betrayed into their hands, and crucified. The apostles always charged his death upon the Jewish rulers and people, and whenever they referred to the cause of it they mentioned nothing but what was done to him by men. Hence it is evident that both he and the apostles considered his death as arising solely from the violence of his enemies. They gave no intimation that it was occasioned by the hand of his Father being stretched forth against him, by *his* plunging his sword in his soul, or by his pouring out his wrath upon him.

In the New Testament the putting Christ to death is represented as a wicked deed, an atrocious murder, planned by ignorance, prejudice, bigotry, disappointed pride, and executed by treachery, malice, perjury, and injustice ; nor is the least hint given that it was what justice required should be done.

I am aware that from one passage of scripture it has been inferred, that the Jews were only instruments in the hand of God, by whom he executed his Son ; but such an inference involves the most absurd, not to say blasphemous, suppositions respecting the divine character, i. e. that he had determined on the murder of an innocent person, but when it was to be perpetrated he kept out of sight, and employed others to do it ; that afterwards he laid the whole blame upon them, and severely punished them for their conduct. This is to suppose the Almighty to be like David, when he plotted the murder of Uriah, but con-

trived to have it effected through the agency of Joab, by the sword of the children of Ammon. The passage referred to is Acts iv. 27, 28. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed (both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together) for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.* Part of this passage should be read as a parenthesis, and then, as *Dr. Du Veil* well observes, ‘ This whole eight and twentieth verse may be aptly joined with the words of the last preceding, *whom thou hast anointed*, in this manner. *For Pontius Pilate and Herod have really gathered together with the gentiles, and people of Israel in this city, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed to do what thy hand and counsel decreed to be done**.

The death of Christ was voluntary. It was by his voluntary obedience to his Father, in bearing testimony to the truth, in opposition to the prejudices of the Jews, that he subjected himself to their resentment, which occasioned their slaying him. He might have kept at a distance from Jerusalem, or have availed himself of his popularity with the multitude to have resisted their attempts on his life, to say nothing of his miraculous powers ; but he never shunned danger when duty called him to face it, nor made the least resistance when treated with the greatest injustice and barbarity ; when he suffered he threatened not, but

* DR. DU VEIL'S *Literal Explanation of the Acts*.

committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. He said, *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scripture be fulfilled?* (Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.) This fully proves that his obedience to death was voluntary; and that God would not have exacted it had it been otherwise. Because he suffered voluntarily, in obedience to the will of his Father, he said, *Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take (receive) it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power (authority) to lay it down, and I have power (authority) to take (to receive) it again. This commandment (to suffer without resistance, and expect the restoration of my life) received I of my Father.* (John, x. 17, 18.) Thus it appears, that he valued truth more than his life; that he chose the most dreadful sufferings rather than disobey his Father, that he preferred the good of mankind to, not only his own reputation and ease, but even to life itself.

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

The Design of the Death of Christ.

GOD hath some wise end in view in every thing which he suffers to take place; it was doubtless to answer some grand and glorious purpose that he suffered his Son Jesus to fall into the hands of wicked men, and to be crucified by them: what this purpose was is the object of our present enquiry.

It was not to effect any change in God, neither in his nature, character, any of his perfections, nor in his designs, that Christ submitted to death; for God is, under every view, an unchangeable being. It was not to excite him to love his creatures, for he had always loved them; nor to render him merciful, for he had always been merciful; nor to render it fit and proper for him to show mercy, and exercise forgiveness, for he had shown mercy and exercised forgiveness long before. It was no doubt to produce an important effect somewhere; but the effect to be produced must be entirely among creatures, relate wholly to them, and be in and upon them only.

The design of the death of Christ may be briefly comprehended in this one point, to confirm the truth of God: and all the effects produced by it result from that confirmation. *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, he is the faithful and true witness.* In the good confession which he wit-

nessed before Pontius Pilate he testified, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth.* His death was the last act of his life ; he died for the same purpose as he lived, it was the finishing of his testimony ; he was a martyr, and the king of martyrs ; by his death he bore the strongest testimony, and gave the highest confirmation, to the truth of God : on due consideration this will appear of the greatest importance to mankind.

It is objected by our opponents that if Christ merely died to confirm the truth, he hath done no more for us than the martyrs who sealed the truth with their blood. To this I reply, that we associate other important objects with his death, which cannot be associated, in the same sense, with the death of the martyrs. Had not he revealed and confirmed the truth of the gospel there could have been no martyrs in its cause ; consequently, what the martyrs sealed with their blood, and the act of their doing it, had a dependence on his first revealing and confirming it. Besides, though the martyrs might seal the truth with their blood, they have none of them risen from the dead as Jesus did, at once to complete the ratification, and illustrate the nature of what they died to defend : and the death of Christ is not to be separated from his resurrection, when considered as the highest confirmation of the truth.

His death was a confirmation of the truth of God under various views. As it had been foretold by the prophets, it was a confirmation of the

general truth of the prophecies in the Old Testament, and of the certainty of their fulfilment. It ratified the ancient promises ; for *he was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.* (Rom. xv. 8.) It seems then that to establish the truth of God, and confirm his promises, was the great end of his ministry, which he closed by his death. The promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, i. e. affirmed, and confirmed. The truth of his character as the Messiah, of his divine mission, and of his doctrine, were confirmed by his death : in particular the doctrine of immortality, which he brought to light, was both ratified and illustrated by his dying and rising ; for if he had not died he could not have risen from the dead, and this most important subject would have been without its strongest evidence, and plainest illustration. As it is the truth of God which enlightens, saves, purifies, and makes us happy, and is the ground of our immortal hopes, it must be an end worthy of God to give it the highest confirmation by the death of his Son. This stamps the highest value and importance on the voluntary surrender which Christ made of his life for our benefit.

As he died to ratify the truth of God, he hereby confirmed the divine love, mercy, and grace to men ; he confirmed the promises made to the fathers, that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (Rom. xv. 9.) The apostles never intimated that his death was intended to manifest the wrath of God, show forth his displeasure against

sin ; but they plainly asserted that it was intended to manifest the love of God, and show his favour to men. *God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Herein perceive we the love of God, because Christ laid down his life for us.* He taught the universal love of God to men, and the greatness of it ; he published his favour to the world ; he declared his rich mercy to sinners indiscriminately ; and he confirmed the truth of these things by his death : and the dispositions he manifested in his sufferings afforded a fine illustration of them. The death of Christ is intended for a testimony : (1. Tim. ii. 6.) and it testifies the truth and grace, the love and mercy of God to his creatures. As a seal is a testimony to the truth of what the writing contains to which it is affixed, and gives validity to it, even so his death ratifies the gospel of the grace of God, and establishes its validity. Hence the value and importance of his death, in removing all unworthy thoughts of God, as a wrathful, vindictive being, and in assuring sinners of the divine love and mercy to them, that they may receive the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, have hope in God, enjoy his salvation, and be drawn to obedience. This surely is an end worthy of the Father of mercies in commanding his Son to die.

The death of Christ exhibits the most perfect example of obedience to the divine will. The Father gave him commandment to lay down his life : and he became obedient to death, even the

death of the cross. It was the most difficult act of obedience, because, all circumstances considered, the most painful, that ever man was called to perform. The opportunity he had of avoiding it, had he declined from the path of duty, rendered his obedience, in not shrinking from the painful task, the more exemplary. The fitness and utility of the person who was destined to the highest dignity and authority, being first called to perform the most difficult and painful obedience, must be manifest. *It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* (Heb. ii. 10.)

The sufferings of Christ were necessary on his own account. This position may startle some persons, but it will be found capable of proof. Pain and suffering are comprehended in that plan of discipline by which the Almighty leads his creatures, as the pupils of experience, to a state of perfection. Sufferings do not always imply sin in the sufferer. Infants, who are not capable of being under any law, and consequently cannot be the subjects of transgression, (for where there is no law there is no transgression,) are the subjects of pain and suffering. All the inferior creatures, to whom it will not be said sin is imputed, suffer and die. The most virtuous men have frequently been the most afflicted: instance Job and Jeremiah. Pain and suffering seem necessary, in various instances, to the formation of truly great and extraordinary

characters. On this general view of things the sufferings of Christ may be thought necessary on his own account.

The greatest characters have been formed in the school of adversity : in this school the character of Christ, if not formed, was perfected. If perfected through suffering, it follows that his sufferings were necessary to make him perfect. It appears that he had to acquire knowledge, to attain virtue, and every thing which constitutes excellency of character, in a gradual way, by attention to the circumstances he passed through, and the will of his Father concerning him; for it behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren. (Heb. ii. 17.) *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered:* (Heb. v. 8.) and by so learning he became perfect: consequently his sufferings were necessary to teach him obedience. It appears that his character was formed, by the excitement of his powers, the exercise of his feelings, and the trial of his virtues, in the painful scenes he endured.

By means of his sufferings and death he was qualified for the exalted station he fills. Had he not suffered and died, he must have remained a stranger to those incidents in the present state of man, which are the most difficult to bear with firmness and composure: at least he could have known them only in idea. Had he not deeply felt, how could he have known how to sympathize with others, and compassionate them? how could he have been touched with the feeling of our infirmi-

ties, and have been a merciful high-priest in things pertaining to God? Thus it was needful for him to suffer and die, that he might be qualified to act with propriety in his exalted station, to sustain the office which he bears as head of the church, and to pursue, with proper feeling, the general interest of mankind.

The sufferings and death of Christ were necessary for the completion of the work which the Father gave him to do, to condemn sin in the flesh, and complete the ministration of righteousness. He was to be an evidence to the world of the practicability of standing against sin, and of doing the whole will of God. His whole ministry, spirit, and conduct, was a condemnation of sin, and he resisted to blood striving against it. He preached righteousness in the great congregation, he exemplified its purest principles in his whole temper and conduct, and by his obedience to death he completed his ministry.

His obedience to death was necessary in order to his being rewarded with all power in heaven and earth, i. e. to his commission being extended to the whole world, gentiles as well as Jews; for he declared before that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Had he not performed the work he could not have attained the reward. Without his submitting to death his obedience had been incomplete; and had he not completed it he must have lost his reward: he would not have been exalted and glorified; he would not have been made Lord and Christ, nor have been

exalted as a Prince and a Saviour ; salvation would not have been preached in his name to the Gentiles ; he would not have been appointed to raise the dead, to judge the world.—Under these views, Christ's submitting to death appears to have been necessary, in order to his attaining all his future greatness, and to his becoming a universal blessing to mankind. This gives uncommon importance to his death.

His death was necessary to complete his example. He can be an example to us only so far as he was like us in nature, state, and circumstances, or as we are capable of becoming like him. Had he never suffered, he could not have been an example to us in suffering : had he not died, he could not have been an example to us in dying. Had he not voluntarily died a violent death for the sake of truth and righteousness, he could not have been an example to those who are called to submit to a voluntary death rather than deviate from truth and rectitude. Had he not perfectly obeyed, he could not have been an example of perfect obedience. But now by his death his character is perfected, his qualifications are completed, his testimony is finished, his obedience is tried and found perfect, he received a glorious reward, and we have a suitable and perfect example of every excellency attainable by us.

Christ died to introduce the gospel to the gentiles, to break down the middle wall of separation between the Jews and them, and to confirm the gospel as a covenant of mercy and grace to man-

kind. As his commission before his death extended only to the Jews, and his personal ministry related solely to them, he had no authority to send the gospel to the gentiles, till after he rose from the dead, when, as the reward of his obedience to death, he received such additional authority, as extended his mission and ministrations to the whole world: on the ground of which he commissioned his apostles, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Hence it is that it is said, he hath broken down the middle wall of partition, reconciled Jews and gentiles in one body, and to have made peace between them, by his cross, to have brought the gentiles nigh by his blood, and to have abolished the hand-writing of ordinances which was against them: namely, because, as the reward of his obedience to death, he has received a commission which embraces the whole world, and is appointed to minister all the blessings of grace and salvation to the whole human race. As covenants in ancient times were confirmed by blood, and God's covenant with Israel was confirmed with the blood of their sacrifices, so the gospel which is spoken of as a covenant, because in it God hath promised his mercy and favour to the penitent and obedient, was confirmed by the death of Christ. Hence his blood is called the blood of the New Testament, and the blood of the everlasting covenant. In reference to this it is called the blood of sprinkling, and is said to speak better things than *Abel*: because under the law the covenant was confirmed by the sprinkling of blood,

and whatever the covenant expresses, the blood which confirms it is, by a figure of speech, said to express. Thus Jesus had a great object before him in submitting to death, an important design to carry into effect, to attain to the high honour of becoming a universal blessing to the world, by receiving, as the reward of his obedience, a commission and authority to extend the gospel to the gentiles, and as he died to confirm its blessings to mankind: hence it is said that for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God. (Heb. xii. 2.)

In reference to mankind, the sufferings and death of Christ, like the whole of his life and ministry, lead to one point, and are in subservience to one grand design, their salvation. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; God sent him into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. His public ministry had for its object the salvation of his hearers. The gospel which he made known is called the word of salvation. Influenced by the same motives as had guided him, and with the same end as he had pursued, throughout his life and ministry, he patiently submitted to his painful and ignominious death. His apostles, commissioned by him, carried forward the same design after his ascension. They called sinners to repentance, they held forth the word of life, they preached the forgiveness of sins, they testified the resurrection of Jesus, and in connection with it the

resurrection of all the dead; they published the same doctrine as he had done before them, their whole ministry had the same object as his, the salvation of men. As Christ in dying had this important object in view, and his death so eminently subserves it, he is said to have died for them, to have died for their sins, and they are said to have redemption through his blood. Yet it is by the knowledge of his gospel, and its influence upon their hearts, they are actually saved; but it was by his obedience to death he confirmed that knowledge to them, and as the reward of that obedience he received authority to communicate it to the gentiles, with all the blessings accompanying it. Hence it is true that he died for our salvation.

With respect to the church of God, many important ends are effected by his death. By confirming the new dispensation, and establishing its ministration, he has redeemed, or delivered back, the church from under the law, or dispensation of Moses, with all its curses; and fully introduced them to the superior light, liberty, and privileges of the gospel. Hence it is said, *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* (Gal. iv. 4, 5.) By confirming the gospel with all its influences, especially to the gentiles, who before were without strength, he hath afforded them all the information, motives, divine assistance, and strength necessary for them to become a holy people. Hence it is said, *He gave*

himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: (Tit. ii. 14.) and, that he loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.) All this he does by the influence and operation of the gospel upon those who believe; but he is said to have given himself for the church that he might do it, because he gave himself to confirm the gospel to them, by which it is effected.

Thus it appears that we derive many and great blessings from the death of Christ, and an important design, to effect which he died, is discoverable, independent of the notion of his making satisfaction for sins. It is irreverent, and discovers great inattention to the scriptures, for men to say, that if Christ did not die to make atonement to divine justice for our sins, we derive no benefit from his death. Is the gospel, with all its blessings, no benefit? Is it no benefit to have the doctrine of immortality ratified, and made plain to the meanest capacity? Is it no benefit to have the strongest confirmation of all the divine promises? Is it no benefit to have salvation brought to us, and all the means of enjoying it placed before us? Is it no benefit to have all the means of becoming holy and happy? If these be benefits, and surely they are of great value, it follows that we derive

many great benefits from the death of Christ. Is nothing to be thought a benefit but our having him to be righteous in our place and stead, and his righteousness transferred to us? Will nothing satisfy us but an impunity in sin? Alas! were the benefits so much contended for by our opponents real, they would do us no good. Whilst it continues true that there is no peace to the wicked, it matters not whose righteousness we imagine is imputed to us, it can never give us solid peace: and if we be made truly righteous in our own persons, the imputation of the righteousness of another will be superfluous. Instead of amusing ourselves about imaginary benefits of the death of Christ, which the scriptures know nothing of, we ought to avail ourselves of the solid advantages afforded us through his death; and labour to attain that purity and holiness of heart and life, that devotedness to God and usefulness to men, to which the gospel, confirmed to us by his death, is calculated to lead us. No further than we become like Christ, in our views and motives, temper and conduct, can his death savingly benefit us.

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

The connection of the death of Christ with the dispensation of the gospel.

MUCH having already been said, in the preceding part of this work, on the connection of the death of Christ with the dispensation of the gospel, and the salvation of men, I shall barely add a few brief remarks, to bring the subject more pointedly into view. If we would understand how his death is connected with the gospel, we must enquire what place he occupies in that ministration, and how the whole of his life and teaching are associated with it.

The gospel dispensation was introduced by Jesus Christ. He was God's messenger, or minister, to reveal, or communicate it. This work he performed with the utmost fidelity ; even at the expence of his own ease, reputation, and life. Circumstanced as things were, influenced as the Jewish rulers and priests were by prejudice, bigotry, pride, and various corrupt interests and passions, it was impossible he should accomplish this work without the sacrifice of his life. All the reproach and persecution he encountered arose from the offence which his doctrine gave, the umbrage which his spirit and conduct occasioned : nor could he shun raising all the malignant passions of the evil-minded against him, without shunning to declare

the whole counsel of God, and deviating from the line of duty which his Father had marked out for him. Consequently his death stands connected with the gospel as it was occasioned by his faithfully discharging his duty, as God's messenger, appointed to communicate it.

The gospel, being a testimony to men, could not obtain credit, and influence upon the human heart, any further than it was attested: it was reasonable that he who was appointed to communicate it should give it the signature and seal of truth. His miracles were a strong attestation to the truth of his mission; but had he shown any cowardice or timidity in the moment of difficulty, had he declined to confirm his doctrine by his sufferings and death, the attestation of its truth had not been completed. The state of things at the time, in particular the opposition made to him and his doctrine, rendered it necessary that he should submit to die in support of what he taught: and his sufferings and death, connected with his miracles and resurrection, fully attested it.

The life of Christ was a striking exemplification of the nature and tendency of his doctrine, that it was pure and benevolent, and had a tendency to purity and benevolence. Nor was his death a less striking exemplification of it. Indeed in his death the peculiar excellency of his doctrine and its happy influence upon the mind, appeared in the most impressive light. What were the doctrines which Jesus taught his disciples? Humility and meekness, gentleness and forbearance, patience and re-

signation to the will of God, love to enemies, to suffer without resistance, to forgive injuries and render good for evil, and entire dependence on God. All these doctrines were strikingly exemplified by him in his sufferings. He manifested no disdain, no haughty contempt, when arrested by a base rabble, and handled by them in the rudest manner; but submissively gave himself into their hands. Through the whole of his mock trial, and cruel treatment, he discovered the same humility and meekness. *He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* In the most trying of moments he was perfectly resigned to the will of God; with the whole scene of his sufferings before him he said, *not my will but thine be done.* He suffered without the least murmur, with the utmost firmness and patience. He manifested nothing but love to his enemies; under all their brutal treatment, he made no resistance; he not only forgave them, but, with his dying breath, prayed that God would forgive them; he rendered them good for evil, by directing that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached to them after his resurrection. Throughout he manifested entire dependence on God, and died saying, *into thy hands I commit my spirit.* Thus his maxims were proved practicable, his doctrine received the fairest illustration, and his death is found to bear the same relation to the gospel as practice bears to theory.

The death of Christ stands connected with all the circumstances by which the dispensation of the gospel was introduced. Those which preceded it received their confirmation from, or were perfected by it. As the reward of such unexampled obedience, he received power to extend the mission of his apostles to all nations, and all the extraordinary gifts of the spirit to qualify them for the work : he also received all spiritual gifts and blessings to communicate to mankind by the gospel. On the ground of that authority which he received as the reward of his obedience to death, the gospel was sent to the gentiles, and its ministration is still continued in the world.

The ministry of Christ at first was limited ; but, when he had proved himself faithful, and his obedience was tried and made fully manifest by his death, it was extended to all nations, he was constituted the head of every man, the head over all things, the Lord of all, i. e. both Jews and gentiles, he was fully instated in his office as head of the church, and appointed heir of all things. Hence it appears that he is at the head of the gospel dispensation, and that the whole ministration of it is lodged in his hands. Consequently, all its blessings and privileges are said to be in Christ Jesus, those who minister under it are his servants, those who believe and obey the gospel are said to be in him, every thing under it is referred to him, as the person whom God hath appointed to preside at the head of the present economy, to manage every thing relative to it : and

hence Christ is said to be all in all. To the honour and dignity of presiding at the head of the gospel dispensation, as extended to the whole world, he attained through his sufferings and death, and possesses his present exalted station as the reward of his having perfectly obeyed.

Under these views the death of Christ stands connected with the dispensation of the gospel, and, thus viewed, it is an event of great magnitude and importance : it has a bearing upon the principal facts, doctrines, and privileges of christianity ; it is associated with the general system, and comes into argument in many practical points of view ; nor is it easy for us to overlook the obligations we are under to him for dying to confirm so many blessings to us.

CHAPTER NINTH.

The connection of the death of Christ with the salvation of men.

WHEN the salvation of men is ascribed to the death of Christ, we are not to consider his death abstractedly, but in connection with various other important circumstances, in fact with the whole of the gospel dispensation. His death may be considered as including the whole of his testimony, because it finished and confirmed it : and as

put for the whole of his ministry and obedience, because it was the completion of both.

His death has a connection with the salvation of men, as he endured all his sufferings with a view to the effecting of their deliverance, and submitted to death in order to the attainment of that power and authority in the exercise of which he does actually save them, by the gospel. As the reward of his obedience, he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. As he patiently endured all his sufferings that he might make known salvation to mankind, and obtain, as a reward, the authority and power of communicating it to the world, and as his death was the grand confirmation of the gospel, it may well be said that we are saved through his death. Had not he submitted to die we know of no way in which salvation would have come to the gentiles, of no person who would have been invested with power and authority to communicate it. It is certainly true that God could have opened a way, he could have appointed a suitable person for the purpose ; but this is only saying, he could have done what he has actually done in the appointment of Jesus Christ. The person whom God had raised up and appointed to be a Saviour must have been anointed with the holy spirit and with power, he must have been the Messiah, he must have had a divine mission, he must have been qualified for the work, he must have been obedient as Jesus was, have performed the same work, in order to his receiving the same reward. We are not capable of conceiving how a

different method could have been adopted consistently with all the circumstances, and the greatest good of the moral system; for God will ever raise to the highest dignity, and honour with the execution of the most important services, the most worthy. Jesus is the person who hath proved himself worthy of the trust committed to his hands and, as our salvation is the object of it, we are under very high obligations to him.

As it is an unquestionable fact that sinners are actually saved by the gospel, the death of Christ stands connected with their salvation, as that which has confirmed to them the gospel and all its blessings. Suppose a man should set up a claim to a large estate, and to establish that claim in a court of law, present an unsealed deed or writing; he would be told he could claim nothing upon the ground of that writing, because, whatever it might express, it had never been confirmed, of course was not valid: suppose, instead of presenting any writing, he should merely present a detached seal, fairly impressed, and on the ground of that make his claim; he would be told he could claim nothing on that ground, for the seal could express nothing, prove nothing, unless affixed to a writing which expressed what it was intended to confirm. Even so the gospel, had it not been ratified by the death of Christ, would have been no ground on which the gentiles could have claimed the privilege of being fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of faith; and the death of Christ, detached from the gospel, of the truth and validity of which it is

an attestation, would be like a seal not attached to any writing, on the ground of which nothing could be claimed. But suppose the man claiming the estate, should present in court a writing which expresses his title, signed and sealed, when the contents of the writing were understood, he might lay his finger upon the seal, and say, 'on the ground of this seal I am entitled to the estate,' because the seal would establish the validity of the writing. Just such is the gospel: it comes to us confirmed and ratified by the death of Christ, and its blessings are frequently mentioned in connection with his death simply, though they are enjoyed through an understanding of the truth and its influence on the heart, because his death has confirmed to us that truth, and the privileges connected with it.

The death of Christ is connected with our salvation as we are called in order to the attainment of it, to be conformed to his death, figuratively, to be crucified with him, to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God. Christians are said to be planted together in the likeness of his death, that they may be also in the likeness of his resurrection. It is only as we attain to the same spirit of self-denial, and crucifixion of the flesh in its affections and desires, which he manifested in his sufferings and death, that we can attain the actual enjoyment of salvation. His death has to do with our salvation, as, when duly considered in all its circumstances, it has a tendency to influence us to entire submission to the will of God, and all those dispositions towards men, which will

greatly promote our deliverance from evil.

Christ having learned obedience, and being made perfect, through sufferings, became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him. In consequence of his obedience to death, he was invested with authority to dispense present salvation to sinners who repent and believe the gospel, and eternal salvation, hereafter, to all the obedient. And if we would attain eternal salvation we must be conformed to his death; as he hath suffered for us in the flesh we must arm ourselves with the same mind, that we may cease from sin: we must be content to suffer with him, if we would reign with him; to suffer reproach, to have our names cast out as evil, for our attachment to truth and righteousness; to bear injuries patiently, without personal resentment, and to render good for evil: we must be willing to be crucified with him to all the evil principles, ungodly maxims, corrupt interests, and wicked practices of the age in which we live. Under these views the death of Christ stands connected with the salvation of men.

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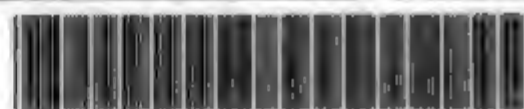
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